

THE  
NEWSLETTER

OF THE COMMITTEE

ON  
MASONIC  
EDUCATION

SUMMER 1995 (3rd Quarter) VOL. 15 NO. 1

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c/o Robert A. Barnett—Editor

P.O. Box 4217

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**An Invitation:** The Newsletter is published by The Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education. We welcome responses from all our readers. If any of our contributors or subscribers have access to historical information about their District, or Lodge, or special individuals, please forward it to the editor. Much of our Masonic History is also linked to the history of our country through members who have been community, business, professional, religious or political leaders. Careful research of material made available should provide some interesting information for newsletter readers. It would also help to educate us all about the contributions of individual members, Lodges and Districts ....to the history of our country, provinces, and our villages, towns and cities. We need to know more about each other and about the part that Canadian Masons have played in our history. Can you help?

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c/o-Robert A. Barnett  
P.O. Box 4217, London, Ont. N5W 5J1

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**•••NOTICE•••**  
**THE COLLEGE OF FREEMASONRY**

**BRETHREN:** The Committee on Masonic Education is still offering its challenging Correspondence Course throughout this grand Jurisdiction. Because of the inter-est that continues to be shown, it now is being offered in a new format. That same twinge of excitement, that same challenge, that same desire to delve into and find out more about the Craft is there - all we have done is to separate the four programs so that YOU may now choose to complete only one - or all four - you may take as many, or as few, of the programs as you wish and in the order your wish

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A supply of the new Application Forms has been for-warded to your District

Education Chairman. Be sure to contact him. Good Luck!

## VISITING LODGES IN ENGLAND AND EUROPE

*Alan R Reeves, 32°, K.C.C.H.*

*Alan F. Reeves is a member of San Francisco Lodge No.139 and the San Francisco Scottish Rite Bodies. He is a Past President of Golden Gate Chapter No.18 of National Sojourners and National Commander of the SHAEF Veterans Association. Bro. Reeves is now retired from a career in education and government.*

Visits to Lodges in England, Austria, and France underline the tradition and diversity of Freemasonry in Europe.

In my Masonic travels throughout Europe, I have discovered a varied and exhilarative journey. My visits in England were highlighted by a Third Degree ceremony at an RAF Lodge whose members were either past or present officers in the Royal Air Force. This was of particular interest to me as my wife's uncle had been a Wing Commander in the RAF during World War II, having been commissioned at Gallipoli in World War I. He was a Mason but, unfortunately, not at that Lodge.

As an American Oxonian, I searched out Lodges in the Oxford area. I was informed there was one Lodge identified with the University, but it was considered "exclusive" as it limited its membership to those in the University. As a graduate, I would have qualified, but I decided on visiting a more open Lodge.

My visit to Vienna Austria, was most intriguing. All of the Lodges are centered in one locale. Through the Secretary's office, I was invited to attend the meeting of "The Mozart Lodge" and found it fascinating. The entire meeting was conducted in candlelight just as it had been some 200 years ago. I do not understand German, however, the Masonic meaning and tradition came through, and I was very comfortable in following their procedures. After the meeting, we adjourned to a dining room down the hall where dinner was served. As I was proudly wearing my Scottish Rite emblem, I asked one of the members why none of their group was wearing an emblem of any kind. I was informed that because of the religious majority in the country, and possible employment repercussions, one did not advertise one's membership in Masonic organizations.



Having spent some time in France, before, during, and after World War II, I looked forward to meetings with my French Brothers. I do speak French, so there was no problem in locating suitable Lodges to attend.

In addition, my attraction to Masonry, as a young lad, was through the writings of Voltaire, our Masonic Brother of the 18th century. Lafayette, too, was one of my heroes and a Mason. I was now, more or less, in my second home. During my first visit to a Lodge in Paris, I was greeted with a large portrait of George Washington hanging in a place of honour.

At the dinner which followed the meeting, I was called upon to speak to the Brethren in French, and I was really delighted to do it. This dinner stays in my mind as the Brother on my right was an Iranian Mason who had left Iran at the demise of the Shah's rule

In travelling to south central France, I was impressed by the Masonic structure on the Rue de Franc-macon in Perigeux. An inscription over the building's entrance states, "The sculptures which ornamented this building's facade were destroyed during the occupation of the Nazis by order of the government of Vichy".

The visit to a Lodge in Sarlat was perhaps the most exciting of all. No one spoke English. One of their guests was a visiting professor from Belgium who was a 32° Scottish Rite member. After the usual business of the Lodge had been conducted, we were instructed by the Worshipful Master that a discussion of a topic, which he distributed to the Brothers, would now ensue. Everyone, including myself, would be required to talk. The subject was of a deep philosophical nature, but applied to current events in Europe at that time. The session lasted for over four hours. We did not leave the Lodge until well after midnight.

## **WHAT'S A MASON?**

***Jim Tresner, 33°***

*Jim Tresner is Director of the Masonic Leadership Institute and Editor of The Oklahoma Mason. A frequent contributor to the Scottish Rite Journal, III :. Tresner is also a volunteer writer for The Oklahoma Scottish Rite Mason and a video script consultant for the National masonic Renewal Committee. The Director of the Thirty-third Degree Copnferral Team and Director of Work at the Guthrie Scottish rite Temple in Guthrie, OK, he is also a member of the Scottish rite Re- search Society, author of the popular new book Albert Pike, The Man Beyond the Monument, and a member of the steering committee of the Masonic Information Center founded by Ill l John H. Robinson, 33°, in February 1993.*

*In simple, clear language," a new booklet from the Ma- sonic Information Center tells what Freemasonry is, why good men become members, and what the Fraternity does for them, their families, and their communities. \**

*"I think my grandfather was one, but I'm not sure what it means."*

*"Yeah, my dad and uncle both used to go to Masonic meetings-I remember Uncle Fred coming by to pick him up. But I don't know where they went or what they did."*

*"I think they wear those funny hats."*

*"I remember when I went away to college my father showed me his ring and told me if I ever needed help, I should look for a man with a ring like that and tell him I was the daughter of a Mason, but he never told me much about it. "*

## **WHAT'S A MASON?**

That's not a surprising question. Even though Masons (Freemasons) are members of the largest and oldest fraternity in the world, and even though almost everyone has a father or grandfather or uncle who was a Mason, many people aren't quite certain just who Masons are.

The answer is simple. A Mason (or Freemason) is a member of a fraternity known as Masonry (or Freemasonry). A fraternity is a group of men (just as a sorority is a group of women) who join together because:

- There are things they want to do in the world.
- There are things they want to do "inside their own minds:"
- They enjoy being together with men they like and respect. (We'll look at some of these things later.)

## **WHAT'S MASONRY?**

Masonry (or Freemasonry) is the oldest fraternity in the world. No one knows just how old it is because the actual origins have been lost in time. Probably, Masonry rose from the guilds of stone masons who built the castles and cathedrals of the Middle Ages. Possibly, they were influenced by the Knights Templar, a group of Christian warrior monks formed in 1118 to help protect pilgrims making trips to the Holy Land.

In 1717, Masonry created a formal organization in England when the first Grand Lodge was formed. A Grand Lodge is the administrative body in charge of Masonry in some geographical area. In the United States, there is a Grand Lodge in each state and the District of Columbia. In Canada, there is a Grand Lodge in each province. Local organizations of Masons are called lodges. There are lodges in most towns, and large cities usually have several. There are about 13,200 lodges in the United States.

If Masonry started in Great Britain, how did it get to America?

In a time when travel was by horseback and sailing ship, Masonry spread with amazing speed. By 1731, when Benjamin Franklin joined the fraternity, there were already several lodges in the Colonies, and Masonry spread rapidly as America expanded west. In addition to Franklin, many of the Founding Fathers—men such as George Washington, Paul Revere, Joseph Warren, and John Hancock were Masons. Masons and Masonry played an important part in the Revolutionary War and an even more important part in the Constitutional Convention and the

debates surrounding the ratification of the Bill of Rights. Many of those debates were held in Masonic lodges.

## **WHAT'S A LODGE?**

The word "lodge" means both a group of masons meeting in some place and the room or building in which they meet. Masonic buildings are also sometimes called "temples" because much of the symbolism Masonry uses to teach its lessons comes from the building of King Solomon's Temple in the Holy Land. The term "lodge" itself comes from the structures which the stonemasons built against the sides of the cathedrals during construction. In winter, when building had to stop, they lived in these lodges and worked at carving stone.

While there is some variation in detail from state to state and country to country, lodge rooms today are set up much the same way.

If you've ever watched C-SPAN's coverage of the House of Commons in London, you'll notice that the layout is about the same. Since Masonry came to America from England, we still use the English floor plan and English titles for the officers. The Worshipful Master of the lodge sits in the East. "Worshipful" is an English term of respect which means the same thing as "Honorable." He is called the Master of the lodge for the same reason that the leader of an orchestra is called the "Concert Master." It's simply an older term for "Leader." In other organizations, he would be called "President." The Senior and Junior Wardens are the First and Second Vice-Presidents. The Deacons are messengers, and the Stewards have charge of refreshments.

Every lodge has an altar holding a "Volume of the Sacred Law." In the United States and Canada, that is almost always a Bible.

## **WHAT GOES ON IN A LODGE?**

This is a good place to repeat what we said earlier about why men become Masons:

- There are things they want to do in the world.
- There are things they want to do "inside their own minds."
- They enjoy being together with men they like and respect.

The Lodge is the center of these activities.

## **MASONRY DOES THINGS IN THE WORLD.**

Masonry teaches that each person has a responsibility to make things better in the world. Most individuals won't be the ones to find a cure for cancer, or eliminate poverty, or help create world peace, but every man and woman and child can do something to help others and to make things a little better. Masonry is deeply involved with helping people-it spends more than \$1.4 million dollars everyday in the United States, just to make life a little easier.

And the great majority of that help goes to people who are not Masons. Some of these charities are vast projects, like the Crippled Children's Hospitals and Burns Institutes built by the Shriners.

Also, Scottish Rite Masons maintain a nationwide network of over 100 Childhood Language Disorders Clinics, Centers, and Programs. Each helps children afflicted by such conditions as aphasia, dyslexia, stuttering, and related learning or speech disorders.

Some services are less noticeable, like helping a widow pay her electric bill or buying coats and shoes for disadvantaged children. And there's just about anything you can think of in between. But with projects large or small, the Masons of a lodge try to help make the world a better place. The lodge gives them a way to combine with others to do even more good.

## **MASONRY DOES THINGS "INSIDE" THE INDIVIDUAL MASON.**

"Grow or die" is a great law of all nature. Most people feel a need for continued growth and development as individuals. They feel they are not as honest or as charitable or as compassionate or as loving or as trusting or as well-informed as they ought to be.

Masonry reminds its members over and over again of the importance of these qualities and education. It lets men associate with other men of honor and integrity who believe that honesty and compassion and love and trust and knowledge are important.

In some ways, Masonry is a support group for men who are trying to make the right decisions. It's easier to practice these virtues when you know that those around you think they are important, too, and won't laugh at you. That's a major reason that Masons enjoy being together.

## **MASONS ENJOY EACH OTHER'S COMPANY.**

It's good to spend time with people you can trust completely, and most Masons find that in their lodge. While much of lodge activity is spent in works of charity or in lessons in self-development, much is also spent in fellowship. Lodges have picnics, camping trips, and many events for the whole family. Simply put, a lodge is a place to spend time with friends.

For members only, two basic kinds of meetings take place in a lodge. The most common is a simple business meeting. To open and close the meeting, there is a ceremony whose purpose is to remind us of the virtues by which we are supposed to live. Then there is a reading of the minutes; voting on petitions (applications of men who want to join the fraternity); planning for charitable functions, family events, and other lodge activities; and sharing information about members (called "Brothers;" as in most fraternities) who are in or have some sort of need. The other kind of meeting is one in which people join the fraternity-one at which the "degrees" are performed. But every lodge serves more than its own members. Frequently, there are meetings open to the public. Examples are Ladies' Nights, "Brother Bring a Friend Nights;" public installations of officers, cornerstone laying ceremonies, and other special meetings supporting community events and dealing with topics of local interest.

## **WHAT'S A DEGREE?**

A degree is a stage or level of membership. It's also the ceremony by which a man attains that level of membership. There are three, called Entered Apprentice, Fellow craft, and Master Mason. As you can see, the names are taken from the craft guilds. In the Middle Ages, when a person wanted to join a craft, such as the gold smiths or the carpenters or the stonemasons, he was first apprenticed. As an apprentice, he learned the tools and skills of the trade. When he had proved his skills, he became a "Fellow of the Craft" {today we would say

"Journey-man"), and when he had exceptional ability, he was known as a Master of the Craft.

The degrees are plays in which the candidate participates. Each degree uses symbols to teach, just as plays did in the Middle Ages and as many theatrical productions do today. { We'll talk about symbols a little later.}

The Masonic degrees teach the great lessons of life-the importance of honor and integrity, of being a person on whom others can rely, of being both trusting and trustworthy, of realizing that you have a spiritual nature as well as a physical or animal nature, of the importance of self- control, of knowing how to love and be loved, of knowing how to keep confidential what others tell you so that they can 'open up' without fear.

## **WHY IS MASONRY SO "SECRETIVE?"**

It really isn't "secretive;" although it sometimes has that reputation.

Masons certainly don't make a secret of the fact that they are members of the fraternity. We wear rings, lapel pins, and tie clasps with Masonic emblems like the Square and Compasses, the best known of Masonic signs which, logically, recall the fraternity's early symbolic roots in stonemasonry. Masonic buildings are clearly marked, and are usually listed in the phone book. Lodge activities are not secret-picnics and other events are even listed in the newspapers, especially in smaller towns. Many lodges have answering machines which give the upcoming lodge activities. But there are some Masonic secrets, and they fall into two categories.

The first are the ways in which a man can identify himself as a Mason-grips and passwords. We keep those private for obvious reasons. It is not at all unknown for unscrupulous people to try to pass themselves off as Masons in order to get assistance under false pretences.

The second group is harder to describe, but they are the ones Masons usually mean if we talk about "Masonic secrets." They are secrets because they literally can't be talked about, can't be put into words. They are the changes that happen to a man when he really accepts responsibility for his own life and, at the same time, truly decides that his real happiness is in helping others.

It's a wonderful feeling, but it's something you simply can't explain to another person. That's why we sometimes say that Masonic secrets cannot (rather than "may not") be told. Try telling someone exactly what you feel when you see a beautiful sunset, or when you hear music like the national anthem which suddenly stirs old memories, and you'll understand what we mean.

"Secret societies" became very popular in America in the late 1800s and early 1900s. There were literally hundreds of them, and most people belonged to two or three. Many of them were modelled on Masonry and made a great point of having many "secrets." Freemasonry got ranked with them. But if Masonry is a secret society, it's the worst-kept secret in the world.

## **IS MASONRY A RELIGION?**

The answer to that question is simple. No.

We do use ritual in meetings, and because there is always an altar or table with the Volume of the Sacred Law open if a lodge is meeting, some people have confused Masonry with a religion, but it is not. That does not mean that religion plays no part in Masonry- it plays a very important part. A person who wants to become a Mason must have a belief in God. No atheist can ever become a Mason. Meetings open with prayer, and a Mason is taught, as one of the first lessons of Masonry, that one should pray for divine counsel and guidance before starting an important undertaking. But that does not make Masonry a "religion."

Sometimes people confuse Masonry with a religion because we call some Masonic buildings "temples." But we use the word in the same sense that Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes called the Supreme Court a "Temple of Justice" and because a Masonic lodge is a symbol of the Temple of Solomon. Neither Masonry nor the Supreme Court is a religion just because its members meet in a "temple."

In some ways, the relationship between Masonry and religion is like the relationship between the Parent Teacher Association (the P.T.A.) and education. Members of the P. T.A. believe in the importance of education. They support it. They assert that no man or woman can be a complete and whole individual or live up to his or her full potential without education. They encourage students to stay in school and parents to be involved with the education of their children. They may



give scholarships. They encourage their members to get involved with and to support their individual schools.

But there are some things P.T.A.s do not do. They don't teach. They don't tell people which school to attend. They don't try to tell people what they should study or what their major should be.

In much the same way, Masons believe in the importance of religion. Masonry encourages every Mason to be active in the religion and church of his own choice. Masonry teaches that without religion a man is alone and lost, and that without religion, he can never reach his full potential.

But Freemasonry does not tell a person which religion he should practice or how he should practice it. That is between the individual and God. That is the function of his house of worship, not his fraternity. And Masonry is a fraternity, not a religion.

## **WHAT'S A MASONIC BIBLE?**

Bibles are popular gifts among Masons, frequently given to a man when he joins the lodge or at other special events. A Masonic Bible is the same book anyone thinks of as a Bible (it's usually the King James translation) with a special page in the front on which to write the name of the person who is receiving it and the occasion on which it is given. Sometimes there is a special index or information section which shows the person where in the Bible to find the passages which are quoted in the Masonic ritual.

## **IF MASONRY ISN'T A RELIGION, WHY DOES IT USE RITUAL?**

Many of us may think of religion when we think of ritual, but ritual is used in every aspect of life. It's so much a part of us that we just don't notice it. Ritual simply means that some things are done more or less the same way each time.

Almost all school assemblies, for example, start with the principal or some other official calling for the attention of the group. Then the group is led in the Pledge of Allegiance. A school choir or the entire group may sing the school song. That's a ritual.

Almost all business meetings of every sort call the group to order, have a reading of the minutes of the last meeting, deal with old business, then with new business. That's a ritual. Most groups use *Robert's Rules of Order* to conduct a meeting. That's probably the best-known book of ritual in the world.

There are social rituals which tell us how to meet people (we shake hands), how to join a conversation (we wait for a pause, and then speak), how to buy tickets to a concert (we wait in line and don't push in ahead of those who were there first). There are literally hundreds of examples, and they are all rituals.

Masonry uses a ritual because it's an effective way to teach important ideas—the values we've talked about earlier. And it reminds us where we are, just as the ritual of a business meeting reminds people where they are and what they are supposed to be doing.

Freemasonry's ritual is very rich because it is so old. It has developed over centuries to contain some beautiful language and ideas expressed in symbols. But there's nothing unusual in using ritual. All of us do it every day.

## **WHY DOES MASONRY USE SYMBOLS?**

Everyone uses symbols every day, just as we do ritual. We use them because they communicate quickly. When you see a stop sign, you know what it means, even if you can't read the word "stop." The circle and line mean "don't" or "not allowed." In fact, using symbols is probably the oldest way of communication and the oldest way of teaching.

Masonry uses symbols for the same reason. Some form of the "Square and Compasses" is the most widely used and known symbol of Masonry. In one way, this symbol is a kind of trademark for the fraternity, as the "golden arches" are for McDonald's. When you see the Square and Compasses on a building, you know that Masons meet there. And like all symbols, they have a meaning.

The Square symbolizes things of the earth, and it also symbolizes honor, integrity, truthfulness, and the other ways we should relate to this world and the people in it. The Compasses symbolize things of the spirit, and the importance of a well developed spiritual life, and also the importance of self-control -of keeping ourselves within bounds. The G stands for Geometry, the science which the

ancients believed most revealed the glory of God and His works in the heavens, and it also stands for God, Who must be at the center of all our thoughts and of all our efforts.

The meanings of most of the other Masonic symbols are obvious. For example, the gavel teaches the importance of self-control and self-discipline. The hourglass teaches us that time is always passing, and we should not put off important decisions.

## **SO, IS MASONRY EDUCATION?**

Yes. In a very real sense, education is at the center of Masonry. We have stressed its importance for a very long time. Back in the Middle Ages, schools were held in the lodges of stonemasons. You have to know a lot to build a cathedral-geometry, and structural engineering, and mathematics, just for a start. And that education was not very widely available. All the formal schools and colleges trained people for careers in the church, or in law or medicine. And you had to be a member of the social upper classes to go to those schools. Stonemasons did not come from the aristocracy. And so the lodges had to teach the necessary skills and information. Freemasonry's dedication to education started there.

It has continued. Masons started some of the first public schools in both Europe and America. We supported legislation to make education universal. In the 1800s Masons as a group lobbied for the establishment of state-supported education and federal land-grant colleges. Today we give millions of dollars in scholarships each year. We encourage our members to give volunteer time to their local schools, buy classroom supplies for teachers, help with literacy programs, and do everything they can to help assure that each person, adult or child, has the best educational opportunities possible.

And Masonry supports continuing education and intellectual growth for its members, insisting that learning more about many things is important for anyone who wants -to keep mentally alert and young.

## WHAT DOES MASONRY TEACH?

Masonry teaches some important principles. There's nothing very surprising in the list. Masonry teaches that:

*Since God is the Creator, all men and women are the children of God.* Because of that, all men and women are brothers and sisters, entitled to dignity, respect for their opinions, and consideration of their feelings.

*Each person must take responsibility for his/her own life and actions.* Neither wealth nor poverty, education nor ignorance, health nor sickness excuses any person from doing the best he or she can do or being the best person possible under the circumstances.

*No one has the right to tell another person what he or she must think or believe.* Each man and woman has an absolute right to intellectual, spiritual, economic, and political freedom. This is a right given by God, not by man. All tyranny, in every form, is illegitimate.

*Each person must learn and practice self-control.* Each person must make sure his spiritual nature triumphs over his animal nature. Another way to say the same thing is that even when we are tempted to anger, we must not be violent. Even when we are tempted to selfishness, we must be charitable. Even when we want to "write someone off:" we must remember that he or she is a human and entitled to our respect. Even when we want to give up, we must go on. Even when we are hated, we must return love, or, at a minimum, we must not hate back. It isn't easy!

*Faith must be in the center of our lives.* We find that faith in our houses of worship, not in Freemasonry, but Masonry constantly teaches that a person's faith, whatever it may be, is central to a good life.

*Each person has a responsibility to be a good citizen, obeying the law.* That doesn't mean we can't try to change things, but change must take place in legal ways.

## **WHAT'S A MASON?**

*It is important to work to make this world better for all who live in it.*  
Masonry teaches the importance of doing good, not because it assures a person's entrance into heaven-that's a question for a religion not a fraternity, but because we have a duty to all other men and women to make their lives as fulfilling as they can be.

*Honor and integrity are essential to life.* Life without honor and integrity is without meaning.

## **WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP?**

The person who wants to join Masonry must be a man (it's a fraternity), sound in body and mind, who believes in God, is at least the minimum age required by Masonry in his state or province, and has a good reputation. (incidentally, the "sound in body" requirement which comes from the stonemasons of the Middle Ages doesn't mean that a physically challenged man cannot be a Mason – many are).

Those are the only "formal" requirements. But there are others, not so formal. He should believe in helping others. He should believe there is more to life than pleasure and money. He should be willing to respect the opinions of others. And he should want to grow and develop as a human being.

## **HOW DOES A MAN BECOME A MASON?**

Some men are surprised that no one has ever asked them to become a Mason. They may even feel that the Masons in their town don't think they are "good enough" to join. But it doesn't work that way. For hundreds of years, Masons have been forbidden to ask others to join the fraternity. We can talk to friends about Masonry. We can tell them about what Masonry does. We can tell them why we enjoy it. But we can't ask, much less pressure, anyone to join.

There's a good reason for that. It isn't that we're trying to be exclusive.

But becoming a Mason is a very serious thing. Joining Masonry is making a permanent life commitment to live in certain ways. We've listed most of them above-to live with honor and integrity, to be willing to share with and care about others, to trust each other, and to place ultimate trust in God. No one should be "talked into" making such a decision.

So, when a man decides he wants to be a Mason, he asks a Mason for a petition or application. He fills it out and gives it to the Mason, and that Mason takes it to the local lodge. The Master of the lodge will appoint a committee to visit with the man and his family, find out a little about him and why he wants to be a Mason, tell him and his family about Masonry, and answer their questions.

The committee reports to the lodge, and the lodge votes on the petition. If the vote is affirmative-and it usually is-the lodge will contact the man to set the date for the Entered Apprentice Degree. When the person has completed all three degrees, he is a Master Mason and a full member of the fraternity.

## **SO, WHAT'S A MASON?**

A Mason is a man who has decided that he likes to feel good about himself and others. He cares about the future as well as the past, and does what he can, both alone and with others, to make the future good for everyone. Many men over many generations have answered the question, "What is a Mason?" One of the most eloquent was written by the Reverend Joseph Fort Newton, an internationally honored minister of the first half of the 20th Century. (See page 17)

*\*This article is available as a booklet produced by The Masonic Information Center (MIC). The Center is a division of The Masonic Service Association. The Center was founded in 1993 by a grant from John J. Robinson, 33°, well-known author and speaker. Its purpose is to provide Information on Freemasonry to Masons and non-Masons alike and to respond to critics of Freemasonry. The Center is directed by a Steering Committee of distinguished Masons geographically representative of the Craft throughout the United States and Canada. The booklet is also available from our Grand Lodge through the Lodge Secretaries.*

## WHAT MAKES A MAN A MASON?

*When he can look out over the rivers, the hills, and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope, and courage-which is the root of every virtue.*

*When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive, and to love his fellowman.*

*When he knows how to sympathize with men in their sorrows, yea, even in their sins - knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds.*

*When he has learned how to make friends and to keep them, and above all how to keep friends with himself.*

*When he loves flowers, can hunt birds without a gun, and feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy when he hears the laugh of a little child.*

*When he can be happy and high-minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life.*

*When star-crowned trees and the glint of sunlight on flowing waters subdue him like the thought of one much loved and long dead.*

*When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response.*

*When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of that faith may be.*

*When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something beyond mud, and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin.*

*When he knows how to pray, how to love, how to hope. When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellowman, and with his God; in his hand a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of a song-glad to live, but not afraid to die!*

*Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world.*

*Rev. Joseph Fort Newton, 33° Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodge of Iowa, 1911-1913*

## **THE SYMBOLISM OF STONE**

(THE SHORT TALK BULLETIN)

By: Bro. Leon Zeldis

Editor, "*The Israel Freemason*"

*This STB was taken from a longer article printed in Vol. 106 for the year 1993 of Ars Quatuor Coronatorum transactions.*

A fundamental question, rarely asked, is the reason why our ancient brethren, who developed the complicated symbolic structures of moral and philosophical teaching we now know as speculative Freemasonry, would choose to base their system on such modest materials as the builder's trade, his tools and legends. Such activities as seafaring, metalworking, agriculture and husbandry, among others, could have been used just as well in developing a 'peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols: Indeed, they have been used for this purpose at one time or another, by various individual thinkers and organizations.

However, the Stonemason's trade, and his material- stone-have such profound, far-reaching and universal significance and connotations that the choice was not only justified but inevitable.

Stone has been, since prehistoric times, the principal material used to build and adorn important structures, where solidity and permanence are the paramount considerations. Stone became paradigmatic of stability, hardness and endurance in



all languages, bearing a wealth of symbolic meaning, with many deep rooted psychological and historical associations and suggestions.

Stone was in all probability the first material used by primitive man. The first coarse tools were simply rough stones used to hammer, cut and grind. The first giant step taken by mankind towards civilization was the change from using natural stones to chipped or flaked implements and arrowheads, with improved cutting edges or allowing the use of a handle. By this apparently simple act, of modifying a stone before using it as a tool, Man became *homo faber* and started to fashion his environment, instead of being the passive receiver of what nature had to offer.

Stones were not only used as tools, but became the object of veneration of primitive men, whose survival depended on them. Rubbing and polishing stones is a well-known, exceedingly ancient activity of man. In Europe, 'holy stones, wrapped in bark and hidden in caves, have been found in many places; as containers of divine powers they were probably kept there by men of the Stone Age.

## **STONE IN JEWISH TRADITION**

Sacred stones or pillars, "called in Hebrew 'Matzevot: are mentioned by Herodotus (5th Cent. B.C.) and appear in several places in the Old Testament.

Jacob, after striking a pact with Laban, erected a stone monument which he called Gal-Ed (Testimonial Pillar). Moses erected twelve stone pillars near the altar of sacrifices.

After crossing the Jordan river, Joshua ordered the taking of twelve stones from the river bed, one for each tribe, setting them up in their camps and carrying them later on their shoulders as a memorial of the crossing on dry ground (Joshua 4). Joshua also set up twelve other stones in the middle of the river, in the place where the priests carrying the Ark of the Testimony had stood. Finally, Joshua erects at Gilgal the twelve stones he had brought from the Jordan, so that future generations would know that the Lord had done to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea.

Later, Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal, made of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used (Joshua 8:30-31). Finally, before dying, he wrote down

the Law on a large stone he set up under an oak tree in Shechem, as a witness against the people of Israel should they betray their covenant (Joshua 24:26-27).

Samuel put up a stone which he called 'EbenEzer' (Stone of Help) after the Philistines were muted at Mizpah (I Samuel 7:12). Adoniah offered a sacrifice near the rock of Zohelet (Joyful), near the fountain of Rogel (I Kings 1:9).

Jacob's ladder, which figures on the First Degree Tracing Board, is directly related to the stone pillar erected by Jacob after his dream. He had used the stone as a pillow and poured a libation of oil to consecrate the memorial (Genesis 28: 18). Jacob names 'Beth-El', the house of God, as the place where he had his dream.

This identity of stone, human being and anthropomorphic deity throws light on the saying: 'Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry whence you were hewn; look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave you birth' (Isaiah 51:1-2). There is a Jewish custom, of placing a small stone over the grave one has visited. This may be connected to the Greek traveller's adding a stone to the Hermes monuments, in order to secure a safe journey.

## **STONE IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

The best example of the importance of stone in Christian teachings is, of course, the case of Simon the fisherman, called Peter (Petrus-the stone) by Jesus: 'I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18).

The Pope, as linear successor to Peter is called 'Holy Father'. The connection between Pater (father) and Petrus (stone) is obvious. In the Hebrew language as well, the same letters forming the word 'father' (av: alef-beth) appear in the word for 'stone' (even: alef beth-noon).

In another instance, Christ himself is compared to a rock (1 Cor. 10:4). A passage in the book of Revelation (2:17) mentions a white stone with a secret name written on it, which only the recipient will understand.

## **STONE IN ISLAMIC TRADITION**

The central point of worship for a Muslim is the Ka'aba at Mecca. Every pious Muslim must make a pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hadj) at least once in his lifetime, making seven circumambulations around the sanctuary of the Ka'aba, the Black Stone which, according to witnesses' reports, appears to be a meteorite. The pilgrims also throw stones at pillars representing the devil, in the vicinity of Mina.

In Jerusalem, there is a stone in the Dome of the Rock, built on the spot where the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple is supposed to have been located, from which Muhammad is said to have jumped to heaven, mounted on 'Al Burak:

## **STONE IN MASONIC LITERATURE**

In Masonic rituals and legends, stone plays a leading role. Beginning with the Entered Apprentice, who is enjoined to polish the rough stone with hammer and chisel, and culminating with the variously shaped stones appearing in the Master Mason Degree, there is hardly a ceremony in symbolic Freemasonry which is not connected in some way with stones.

After completion of the initiation ceremony, the new Brother is placed in a particular position within the Lodge and is usually told that he represents the cornerstone on which Freemasonry's spiritual Temple must be built.

In the Edinburgh Register House MS ( 1696) , the Jewels of the Lodge include the Perpend Esler and the Broad Oval. The first is a perpendicular ashlar, that is, a stone placed crosswise through a wall, while the second is believed to be a corruption of a 'broached dornal; that is, a chiselled stone.

Similar information appears in the Chetwode Crowley MS ( c. 1700) :  
'perpendester' and 'broked -mall:

The Mason's work is thus described in the Dumfries No 4 MS (c. 1710): 'to work in all manner of worthy work in stone: Temple, Churches, Cloysters, Cities, Castles, Pirimides, Towers & all other worthy buildings of stone: In the same manuscript we find a reference to the 'two pillars of stone: one that would not sink and the other that would not burn, which held the noble art or science.

The Mason himself, as we have noted, is likened to a stone. In Robert Samber's dedicatory Preface to *Long Livers*, (London, 1722), we find this pithy definition: "Ye are living stones, built up a spiritual House, who believe and rely on the chief Lapis Angularis, which the refractory and disobedient Builders disallowed..:'

In conclusion, the deep and various meanings of stone as a physical object and as allegory make it easy to understand why the art of the builder should have been selected as the appropriate vehicle to convey the philosophical and mystical teachings of speculative Freemasonry in its different manifestations.

"Man has been always a builder, and nowhere has he shown himself more significantly than in the buildings he has erected. When we stand before them-whether it be a mud hut, the house of a cliff-dweller stuck like the nest of a swallow on the side of a canyon, a pyramid, a Parthenon, or a Pantheon-we seem to read into his soul. The builder may have gone, perhaps ages before, but here he has left something of himself, his hopes, his fears, his ideas, his dreams."

*Joseph Fort Newton*  
*Grand Chaplain, Grand Lodges of Iowa, 1911-1913*

## **THE SHORT TALK BULLETIN**

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## **(INTERNET) HOME PAGES**

*Gurnee K. Bridgman, 33°*  
12770 Portage Lane NE, Bemidji, Minnesota 56601-7158  
*E-Mail: Gurnee@Vax1. Bemidji.msus.edu.*  
*Phone: (218) 243-2002*

*"Home pages" on the Internet's World Wide Web allow instant Masonic networking and communication.*

A new facet of the Cyberspace age has appeared on the scene. It has begun to revolutionize communication as we know it, and it holds great potential for every Mason, Craft Lodge, and member of an Appendent Body. It's called the World Wide Web. The Web is part of the vast, global network of computers known as the Internet and is made up of electronic documents known as home pages. These "pages" can be created by anyone and accessed by everyone, making this a bold and effective method of communication.

A home page can incorporate anything the author wishes: text, sound, and graphics. Most importantly, these pages are linked to related pages which makes jumping from page to page easy for even the computer novice.

Relative to the Craft, anything except esoteric material is fair game for inclusion. For instance, a Craft Lodge might include its location, time and place of meetings, scheduled Degree work, or table Lodges. Grand Lodges can cover their activities on a broader level-Annual Grand Lodges, district meetings, and other visitations are just a few examples. Also, names and addresses of Grand Line officers are commonly seen. A Scottish Rite Valley might use a home page to display Reunion dates, other meetings and activities. Degree portrayals, contacts, and pertinent information relative to the Childhood Language Disorders Clinics, Centres, and Programs may also be included.

As home pages are open to all, whether a Craft member or not, they provide several extremely important benefits that should be recognized. First, Jobies, Rainbows, and DeMolays can check in and see what's happening. It's the younger set that has become computer literate and uses computers as part of their everyday life. This is an area of strong interest to them, in which they can learn more about the Craft and

the part it can play in their future lives. Home pages represent a superb line of communication to them.

Another benefit is that home pages can provide a forum where we can tell the truth about the Craft and what it stands for. A Masonic home page can be a great vehicle for responding to and combating the innuendoes, half-truths, and simple misstatements we see and hear so often from those who are anti-Craft.

Right now a number of Grand Lodges have their own home pages. And, as the technology becomes more accessible, individual Lodge home pages are appearing with greater frequency.

As a first step in seeing what they're all about and the potential they represent, you should check into some and see what is covered. In today's vernacular, this is called "surfing the web." What does it take? A computer with a mouse, a modem (a device that permits information to be sent and received over phone lines), and what is called a "browser." This is the software that permits you to get into the site and move around just by clicking the mouse. Some browsers handle text only, but most will display embedded graphics. If all of this doesn't make much sense to you, just ask any middle-school, high-school or college student to show you how. You'll find it's much easier than you might think; they'll tell you "it's a piece of cake".

Brethren, we need to move with the new world and take advantage of what advancing technology can offer us, for both our short- and long-term growth. I would hope every "computerized" Mason would make a trial run into the World Wide Web, check out a home page or two, and consider how having and using one might prove beneficial to his particular Lodge or Bodies.

Here are some home pages that carry Masonic material. The cryptic lines that follow are the addresses of each page. These need to be typed into your browser exactly as shown. After that, you can move around the Web by just clicking your mouse buttons.

*<http://www.gryffin.com/MU>*

This page holds *Masonry Universal*, a compendium about and for the Craft, which comes out of England and is distributed to Masons around the world.

<http://www.Freemasonry.org/> Acacia

This site has Masonic information and high-resolution, high-quality Masonic, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Shrine, and Eastern Star graphics.

<http://www.Freemasonry.org/psoc>

This site has information from *The Philalethes*, the premier society for Masonic research and information.

[http //www.adfa.oz.au/-/rap/Freemasonry.html](http://www.adfa.oz.au/-/rap/Freemasonry.html)

This Australian site covers topics of "Down Under" Masonic interest.

<http://international.com/Hiram/hiram.html> This site covers general Masonic material.

As you "surf" these pages, you will find links to many others. For example, the following Grand Lodges now have their own home pages: California, Hawaii, Iowa, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Oregon, and Washington

When you get involved, you'll find it's informative, educational, productive and, most of all, fun. You'll find source material for great Lodge educational programs. You'll meet other Masons, near and far, and you'll expand your Masonic interest and light. Brethren, that's what it's all about.

One final thought. Developing a "home page" for your Lodge or Valley can be an enjoyable and worthwhile project. However, the mechanics can be somewhat intimidating. If you decide to proceed, it would be wise first to contact someone knowledgeable in the area. It'll make the process smoother and less frustrating. If I can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me using the addresses at the head of this article.

*Curnee K. Bridgman is a Past Master of Poynette Lodge No.173 in Wisconsin, sunrise Lodge No.130 in North Dakota and a Life Member of the Craft Lodge, the Scottish Rite, and the York Rite. He is a Past commander, Past Wise Master, and Past Venerable master of the Fargo Valley and now serves as Prior in the Consistory. He is active in the York Rite and at El Zagal Shrine and is a Past Patron, International Order of the Eastern Star. A 44-year Mason and a University of Michigan graduate, he attends Bemidji State University (Bemidji, Minnesota) as a special graduate student. He was coronetted a Thirty-third Degree Inspector General Honorary in 1995.*

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

The Questions & Answers section includes excerpts from a list of over 100 Q. & A. compiled and prepared by R. W. Bro. Frank I. Bruce. These questions were collected by the Education Committee of Toronto District #3 from 1976 through 1978. The answers were supplied by W. Bro. Harry Carr (past secretary and editor of Quatuor Coronati Lodge #2076 U.K.). Our thanks to R. W. Bro. Frank Bruce for making them available for use in The Newsletter.

**QUESTION 83:** Why was H.A. in the Temple? He was not a priest. Did not someone see him stagger, 'faint and bleeding'?

**ANSWER 83:** The Temple was not yet complete and not yet dedicated. Our legend says that he had gone there to pray, but as the chief architect, or Master mason in charge, he could have been there whenever he pleased.

As to why nobody saw him during the attack, our legend says that he went there at 'high twelve', when the workmen would have gone to eat or to siesta. In any case, the attack is said to have taken place inside the building, and H.A. never came out; he only staggered from door to door inside the building. But please remember that we are dealing with a legend. The Bible tells us of his "parentage, of his remarkable skills in several Crafts and how Hiram, King of Tyre, sent him to Solomon with a remarkable recommendation; it also tells of his actual work on the Temple and its appurtenances. But that is all. Everything else that we say about him is pure legend designed to teach several lessons, but mainly (I believe) 'faithful unto death' and 'the hope of resurrection'.

**QUESTION 84:** How did the Harris code, which is used in the third degree Tracing Board, become connected with Masonry?

**ANSWER 84:** John Harris, a miniature painter and architectural draughtsman, was initiated in 1818 and published his first set of designs for Tracing Boards in 1823. In 1846, the Emulation Lodge of Improvement called for new designs of Tracing Boards, and a set designed by Harris won the prize and became the standard set for that body. The code, to which you refer, is probably the one which appears in that set, but Harris designed several other sets in which the code was used.



But Harris did not invent the code. It was certainly in use a hundred years before 1846. The earliest versions I have been able to trace appear in the French exposures. In 1745 *Le Sceau Rompu* (The Broken Seal) was published, a tiny book of 68 pages, in eight chapters describing the Craft, its objects, ranks, meetings, ceremonies, signs, etc. Chapter VIII dealt with 'Masonic Characters, or Masonic Writing' with a diagram showing a system of angles each of which represented a letter. When a dot was inserted in that same angle it represented a different letter. Broadly, the system was similar to that used by Harris, but the letters were in an usual arrangement.

The same system was used by Louis Travenol in two later exposures of 1747 and 1749, but before those that appeared, a far superior arrangement had been published in France, in 1745, in *L'Ordre des Francsmacons Trahi*.

Being French, the diagrams omitted the letters K and W, but the diagram on which it was based was identical with ours. Nowadays there are two main systems in use, depending on whether the chart, or diagram, is read from left to right as in English, or from right to left as in Hebrew. The whole system may have been in use long before the dates mentioned here. I have quoted only the earliest Masonic examples.

**QUESTION 85:** Can a Candidate participate in the F.P.O.E. with only one arm, right or left?

**ANSWER 85:** The wording of this question implies that the candidate has already taken his first two degrees. In that case, the answer is certainly 'Yes'. The Master, at that point of the ceremony would probably demonstrate on another Brother how the Points are normally shared, and then he would go through them again with the Candidate, who would do all that he can do, despite the absence of one limb.

This question raises the age old problem in the Ancient Charges, which described that 'no master should take an apprentice..., unless he be a perfect youth, having no maim or defect in his body that may render him incapable of learning the art...' Originally an operative rule, this was designed to ensure that the apprentice would eventually be able to give a fair days work for his pay. Clearly that strict rule could not be held to apply to prospective members of speculative Lodges. There is

evidence that the subject was considered by English Masonic authorities in 1875, apparently without any specific result.

During the first World War, 1914-1918, it became obvious that the 'doctrine of perfect youth' would have to be amended for the benefit of those men who had been maimed or disabled while on active service. In July 1918, a circular letter was issued to all Lodges under the United Grand Lodge of England to remedy the situation. It ruled that: '...when the defect does not render a candidate incapable of learning our art there is no reason why he should not be initiated, provided he is able to understand our secrets and mysteries and to explain or exemplify them when properly called upon'.

Safeguards were added for proper investigation, and approval by the Master of the Lodge who was held responsible for ensuring that the candidate's condition complied with the new rule and, after full details had been submitted, for the final approval of the Provincial or District Grand Master, or the Grand Master himself.

**QUESTION 86:** How could the 'genuine secrets' be lost when they were known to three Grand Masters? Two G.M.s were left. Would it not be better to say that they were known to the two G.M.s, but that neither could divulge them because that could only be done in the presence of three? In the circumstances, could not some ruling have been made to divulge?

**ANSWER 86:** This part of our story is based on the (Masonic) tradition preserved in the R.A. ritual, that three Grand Masters presided at the building of Solomon's Temple and they were the sole repositories of the genuine secrets, which could only be conferred by the participation of all three. Thus, the death of one of them implied that the secrets were 'lost' in the sense that they could no longer be conferred.

You suggest that 'it would be better to say ...that neither (of the two survivors) could divulge them because that could only be done in the presence of three'. But we do, in fact, say almost exactly that. You will recall that at a certain moment in the ceremony, we have the words '...without the consent and cooperation of the other two, he neither could nor would divulge them'.

This part of the ceremony is directly concerned with the R.A. and cannot be discussed here in detail. I hope it may suffice if I say that the *earliest versions of the M.M. degree were complete in themselves*. A certain amount of ritual 'tailoring' had to be done to create the linkage with the newly emerging R.A. ceremony so that the

story was left more or-less unfinished in the Craft degree, with its so called completion in the R.A. So, in answer to your third question, no ruling was made, only a modification of the original legend with provision for the sequel in the R.A. Several illogicalities remain, or, in tailoring language, the raw seams tend to show occasionally, but when you discover the defects it is advisable to remember that all this is Masonic legend or allegory.

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Articles can be of one paragraph notes of interest or to a limit of approximately 1300 words.

**Please refer page To All Contributors herein.**

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Robert A. Barnett - Editor  
P.(.) Box 4217, London, Ontario  
N5V 5J1