



The Masonic Messenger

The Official Publication of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Alabama

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GRAND LODGE OF F. & A.M. OF ALABAMA

SPRING 2013



Inside this edition...

A MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING GRAND MASTER discussing recent tragedies that have come to pass within the Grand Lodge and hopes for this coming year.

THE 'KEY' TO OUR SUCCESS, thoughts, plans and goals for Freemasonry in Alabama as set forth by Grand Master Charles A. Booker (posthumous)

THE ALABAMA CHILD ID PROGRAM needs volunteers to help make an impact on our communities and make this worthwhile cause a success.

UPDATE on the construction of Rising Virtue Lodge No.4

CHARLES A. BOOKER GRAND MASTER, 1937-2013

Charles Arthur Booker was born in McKenzie, Alabama on February 10, 1937 to Royal and Pearl Booker. He attended McKenzie High School where he graduated in 1955. After graduation he enlisted in the United States Air Force where he served from 1955 to 1963. After his military service he worked for CSX railroad until his retirement in 2002.

The year 2002 was a good year for Brother Charles. He met Patricia Louise Hammons and on September 6, 2002 they were married. From a previous marriage he has 5



children, 11 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

Charles was initiated an Entered

Apprentice December 14, 1974, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft February 25 1975, and raised to the degree of Master Mason March 29, 1975, in Garland Lodge #684 where he served as Worshipful Master 7 years and Lodge Secretary 4 years. He became a dual member of Carney Lodge #549 on October 14, 2003.

He joined the Valley of Mobile Scottish Rite on June 1, 1985 and was invested with the KCCH November 21, 2009. He has been a member of the Monroeville York Rite Bodies since July 24, 1987, and is a member of Abba Shrine in

(See BOOKER on Page 2)



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A Message From The Acting Grand Master

By LANE WEATHERBEE,
Deputy Grand Master,
Acting Grand Master

My Dear Brethren:

Never has there been a Grand Master of Alabama Masons who is more humble and grateful than I. I became the Acting Grand Master because of the loss of a great friend, a great man and a great Mason, Charles Booker.

I always looked forward to seeing and talking with Charlie. During my two years on the Grand Lodge line, Charlie's quiet demeanor and dry humor were great assets in all our dealings. While I am speaking of my loss, I am also reflecting the great loss to the Grand Lodge of Alabama.

Please keep Charlie's family in your prayers. As the Acting Grand Master, I have directed that Pat Booker is still the "First Lady of Masonry in Alabama."

Pat is a wonderful, caring and compassionate lady. She has worked for three years, planning for this year. I will do my utmost to see that she receives the support, privileges and respect due the Grand Master's wife. Pat, we all love you.

Two of the great tenets on which our fraternity is based are charity and brotherly love. As most of you know, my home was completely destroyed by fire. The outpouring of kindness from across this state has been overwhelming. The offers of help, expressions of sympathy and concern, monetary contributions and prayers have been overwhelming. My loss was great. My daughter, great grandson and I were left only with the clothes on our backs and a few items we had in our car. The response from this fraternity was greater. The things we lost were, for the most part, material things that can be replaced.

The many, many offerings of true, unselfish, brotherly love, compassion and caring have left me with a new appreciation of Masonry and a deep gratitude in my heart that words cannot express.

Brethren, I can only say the most sincere, "Thank you." While these and other words are not adequate to express my feelings, please accept them until I can do better.

Turning to other matters, the Corporate Board met with the Finance Committee on March 9, and it was a fruitful meeting. The members of the committee adjusted our investment strategy to meet the changing economy, and the board

adopted the recommendations. We look for continued financial stability.

Finally, I respectfully ask for your continued support and friendship as your Grand Lodge Officers and I go about the task of making the decisions that will guide Alabama Masonry. While my time may be somewhat limited in the coming weeks, I plan to visit in all sections of our state in the coming months, and I hope to see and talk with many of you.

Again, thank you for everything, and I give you my word that I will do the very best I can in advancing Alabama Masonry.

The "Key" To Our Success

By CHARLES A. BOOKER
Grand Master (Posthumous)

In the past three years I have had the opportunity to attend several neighboring Grand Lodge Communications, the North American Conference of Grand Masters and the Southeastern Grand Masters Conference. Throughout these events it has become apparent that a common concern permeates the fraternity - membership. Everyone is looking for a solution, a "key" that will unlock the answer. We have seen our numbers nationwide fall from approximately 4.1 million to 1.33million over the past 53 years. Alabama peaked in 1961 with 76,511 members and has steadily fallen until July 2012 when it was 27,882. Every Grand Lodge has been and is now looking for solutions to reverse this trend. As Alabama Masons we cannot afford the luxury of sitting back and waiting for someone else to solve our problems, we must solve our own.

This year, as Grand Master, I will be devoting my time and energy to membership. If each of you will help in this effort we can achieve remarkable success. We can reverse this trend one Mason and one Lodge at a time. The first place to start is with existing members; calling them and

inviting them to Lodge, making that new EA, FC or Master Mason feel special and wanted, to give these new and inactive Masons a reason to come to Lodge other than sitting through a business meeting or degree. Remember, not everyone has an office and not everyone has an interest in the ritual. Do community activities outside of the Lodge by utilizing existing Grand Lodge Programs or those that the Lodge may come up with or propose.

Freemasonry is a way of life. It is this association with good men and true -building a bond of friendship and brotherly love that endures for a lifetime, helping one another and knowing that whatever station we have in life, we are all equal as Masons. A man never has the opportunity to truly find out what the Fraternity is about unless he is made to feel welcome, unless we make that extra effort to find a place for him in our midst, to make him part of our "team".

All of your Grand Lodge Officers will be talking about this topic as they travel throughout Alabama this year. Regardless of what we say or encourage you to do, we can do nothing unless you get involved in this campaign to change the direction of our fraternity. I know what the "key" to our success is; look in the mirror, it is you!

BOOKER

Continued from Page 1

Mobile and the Order of the Eastern Star in Greenville Alabama.

Brother Charles was examined for his Grand Lodge Certificate of Proficiency by Brothers Larry W. Stinson and C. B. Dodd, which he received October 13, 1988. Brother J. C. Brady appointed him as District Lecturer in Group 7 District 31 in 1989. In 1993 he served as Lecturer in Group 7 District 25, going back to 31 the following year. In 2000 when the Groups were combined to 5 state wide he had his old District but it was now Group 5 District 40, which position he held until he was elected Junior Grand Warden in November 2009 and was planning to return to after his years serving in the Grand Lodge.

Brother Charles has served the Grand Lodge of Alabama in the following Offices:

Junior Grand Warden in 2009
Senior Grand Warden in 2010
Deputy Grand Master in 2011

At the 2012 annual communication of the Grand Lodge, he was elected and Installed as Grand Master on November 14, 2012.

On December 8, 2012, he became a Knight Mason in Pensacola Florida. Also in December he was made a Prophet at Site in Al Hassan Grotto in Mobile.

Brother Charles Booker was for his entire Masonic career a faithful servant of the Craft. He will be missed by all who new him. On February 6, 2013, he was called by the Great Architect of the Universe to service in the Celestial Lodge above.

The Masonic Messenger

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Please send all changes of address
and membership status to your
Lodge Secretary



Grand Lodge of Alabama Child ID Program

By JOHN R. STRICKLING
SGW, Committee Chair

My first order of business is to thank all the Brethren for approving the 2012 - 2013 budget at Grand Lodge. That approval permitted the formation of the Child ID Program Committee and gave the necessary funding to expand the Program to meet the growing demand. I am pleased to have this opportunity to inform you of the progress we have made thus far.

Since November we have doubled the number of our Child ID kits. We now have 20 serviceable kits to employ statewide, these have been distributed so that each group has 4 kits. In the event that demand in one Group exceeds that in others, for a certain date, we will have the ability to transfer equipment between Groups for short periods.

We have updated the Child ID webpage in the past few months with more information. The

webpage now not only gives an overview of the Program, but also contains information on how to conduct an event, the materials and equipment supplied by the Grand Lodge, what materials the Lodge will need to provide, the number of kits required for an event, the number of volunteers needed and the ability to view and print the flyers and questionnaires. Contact information for each Group Committee member is also included. It is still a work in progress but we are trying to make this Program an easy and enjoyable experience for all involved. I invite you to visit the Child ID Website at www.alchip.org.

The Child ID Program can be set up and used in schools, churches, daycares, public or community events or Lodge functions. The Program may be used in conjunction with civic groups, law enforcement agencies

or fire departments. Although it is called a Child Identification Program it can be used to the benefit of children or adults. This is one of the most comprehensive programs available in the country and it is FREE! What a magnificent way to bring the Masonic Fraternity to the forefront of public attention. We are providing a service to give parents and law enforcement a tool to save missing or abducted children at no cost to them. If we can save one Child, is it not worth our efforts?

It is my hope that every Lodge in Alabama will schedule at least one event this year to take advantage of this gift we have been given. I promise you that once you have conducted one event and have had

the opportunity to interact with the parents and children, you will want to schedule another one. Please do not worry about volunteers on the next event, you will have more than enough!

Our Grand Master Charles Booker wanted membership to be his primary project this year. Public awareness, membership involvement and community service projects will help not only to retain members but attract the kind of men we are looking for. The Child Identification Program meets all the criteria needed to achieve this goal while providing our communities with the tools to help keep our children safe.

How Can I Help My Lodge?

By HART FRANKLIN, WM
Omega Lodge No. 380
Grand Lodge of Florida

What is a Lodge? It's a team. A team of brothers all acting in concert to achieve common goals. Some brothers are good at ritual work. Some are interested in Masonic history and education. Some prepare meals. Some teach the catechisms to new Masons. Some know all the details of Lodge administration and management outlined in the Florida Digest. Some take an interest in maintaining the building and grounds. Someone maintains the library, cleans the bathrooms, sweeps and mops the dining room floor, and vacuums the carpet. When the plumbing springs a leak, a fixture needs re-wiring, or the grass needs mowing, there's a brother who takes care of it. Some simply attend meetings and give monetary support when the collection basket comes around or give advice when the craft are considering a difficult issue. Some give rides to brothers who can no longer transport themselves. There are many ways

you can help your Lodge, to be a part of the team, to use your unique talents to help us achieve our goals.

Each man is part of the team simply by paying dues, and each is limited by the constraints of his own cable tow. No man can judge another's level of involvement in the Lodge. But the fact is only a small percentage of our membership actually participate at all in the workings of the Lodge. Attendance at meetings is rarely more than 10% of members. When degrees are conferred we regularly have to rely on visitors from other Lodges to fill the chairs. It always seems to be the same small group of regulars who shoulder the load throughout the year. We are grateful for that small group of regulars, but don't fool yourself in thinking that they have nothing else to do with their time. They all have busy lives and yet have chosen to make time for Lodge work.

Ask yourself if you are doing everything you can to support your Lodge, to be a part of the team. We need your help. We need your unique talents. We need your insight and advice. We need more active brothers.

Rising Sun Lodge No. 29 A Brief History

By NEAL HUDSON
Rising Sun Lodge No. 29

Rising Sun Lodge No. 29 was organized in Decatur, Alabama and chartered in 1827.

Its early members were pioneer settlers of Morgan County and those who laid out and founded the city of Decatur. As war veterans, planters, builders, legislators, county officials, doctors, ministers, lawyers, bankers, railroad and business men, they figured in practically every important development during the first quarter to half century of the county's history.

A Masonic Hall was built in 1834, the lower floor being used for church and school purposes.

It is very probable that a pre-Civil War glimpse of the actual building Rising Sun Lodge occupied is visible on one or both lithograph drawings displayed on our website:

www.risingsun29.org/about.html

Rising Sun Lodge was destroyed November 25, 1864 by Federal troops during the Civil War. Afterwards, meetings were held in several different places, most likely ranging from individual members homes, to other buildings as they became available.

In 1873, a lodge was built on the northwest corner of Bank and Pond Streets and meetings were held (See RISING SUN Page 4)



SOME HISTORIANS BELIEVE THAT RSL29 MET AT THE MCCARTNEY HOTEL AFTER THE LODGE WAS DESTROYED BY "THE ENEMY." MCCARTNEY WAS A PAST MASTER

RISING SUN

Continued from Page 3

COTACO OPERA HOUSE

there until 1876, when that building caught fire and burned to the ground. Rising Sun Lodge then moved to a two-story building on the corner of Bank and Market Streets. This building was closer to the river, and served as Rising Sun's designated Lodge for several years.

In 1890, the Grand Lodge of Alabama issued a dispensation for another Lodge, naming it New Decatur Lodge No. 491.

On September 12, 1907, The Grand Lodge of Alabama issued a dispensation for Austinville Lodge No. 679 and it was chartered on December 8, 1907. The charter was forfeited in 1933.

In 1916, New Decatur was renamed to Albany, respectively changing the Lodge name to Albany Lodge No. 491. Meeting minutes from Albany Lodge reveal that the three lodges regularly participated in courtesy degree work.

In 1917, Rising Sun's building caught fire, and burned once again. From there, the Lodge moved into the Knights of Pythias Building, which was located between Church and Wilson Streets.

In 1934, Rising Sun moved to the Masonic Temple, formerly the Cotaco Opera House, on Johnston Street owned by Albany Lodge No. 491. The Cotaco Opera House was the first Opera House built in Alabama and in 1986 was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

On May 3rd, 1935, Albany Lodge and Rising Sun Lodge were consolidated and, upon agreement, were fully chartered as the original Rising Sun Lodge No. 29.

Rising Sun Lodge met there until moving to its current location on the corner of Bank and Walnut Streets. Rising Sun Lodge has recovered from being destroyed by the "enemy" during the Civil War. It has held meetings in at least 8 different locations since, twice burning to the ground losing its charter, jewels and furniture. It has survived two major epidemics of Yellow Fever in 1878 and again in 1888 that claimed the lives of its members.

During the 19th, 20th and in the 21st centuries, we've had officers and members who have defended our culture, our freedoms and our lives; some having returned home maimed physically and mentally and others who failed to return home at all, having paid the ultimate sacrifice in faithful discharge of their sworn duty or Hippocratic Oath - all Heroes.

It's the internal and not the external qualities that make a Rising Sun Lodge No. 29 member.

We are very proud of our Grand Lodge lineage which includes our Past Masters, Honorable MWPGM James McGinnis Brundidge and present RWSGW Brother John Strickling.

As 1 of 18 nationwide recipients, Rising Sun Lodge No. 29 was awarded the 2011 Masonic Service Association of North America's Mark Twain Award for Masonic awareness in the Lodge and in the community.

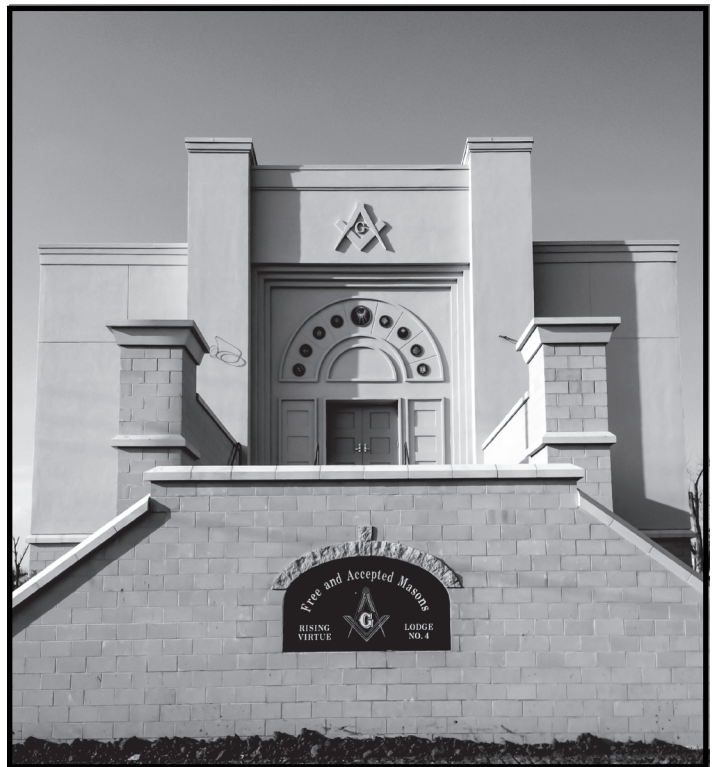
In 2012, our website had over 28,000 visitors and received three awards. Please visit us online at:

www.RisingSun29.org

Rising Virtue Lodge No. 4 A Picture Is Worth 1,000 Words



RISING VIRTUE LODGE NO. 4 AFTER APRIL 27TH TORNADO



NEWLY CONSTRUCTED RISING VIRTUE LODGE NO. 4

As the photograph clearing shows, the construction of the new home for Rising Virtue Lodge #4 is nearing completion. According to M.W. Brother Ron Andress, PGM the Brethren of his Lodge are hoping to occupy the building by late spring or early summer of this year.

Rising Virtue Lodge #4 and Von Bayer Lodge #699 were both destroyed by the tornadoes that struck Tuscaloosa in April of 2011. These two Lodges have since consolidated into one Lodge, Rising Virtue #4. We congratulate these Brethren for their ability to overcome the adversity and despair that accompanies such a loss. They have been able to construct a building that will be an asset to the Masonic fraternity and the City of Tuscaloosa.