

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! EMAIL SUBMISSIONS FOR THE SPRING ISSUE OF THE MASONIC MESSENGER BY MARCH 1ST.

If your Lodge has any events or news to share, contact Parker Moore (pdmoore1@gmail.com) with details. Check out the Grand Lodge Facebook page for more news and events at www.facebook.com/GLofAL. We will update the page as often as possible. Get involved today! Submit to the Masonic Messenger and the Grand Lodge Facebook page!!

FAIRMOUNT LODGE № 238
AWARDS TWO
50 YEAR PINS

Fairmount Masonic Lodge #238 had two 50 year pin presentations on April 12th at the Lodge in Red Level. Mr. Harold Gebhard of Pensacola Florida (Formerly of Red Level) was presented a Gold Pin by the Grand Lodge of Alabama for his faithful service to the Fraternity for over 50 years. He was accompanied by his wife Lelia and his niece Carolyn Taylor.

Mr. Ronald Taylor of Red Level was also presented a 50 year pin on April 12th for his faithful service to the Fraternity. He was accompanied by his wife Mavis.



From Left: Lelia Gebhard, Harold Gebhard, Ronald Taylor and Mavis Taylor



From Left: Harold Gebhard, Ronald Taylor and Lelia Gebhard



Ronald Taylor and Mavis Taylor

**“Taking Care of Our Own”
Masonic Social Services Program**
Financial assistance is available to our Brethren and Widows who are in need!!! Contact the Grand Lodge for more information or visit the website to download program details:
alafreemasonry.org/committees/coprog

FROM THE DESK
OF THE
GRAND SECRETARY

BY TEDDY GROGAN, PGM

Brethren, before I give you the information about the upcoming Grand Lodge Session, I would like to tell you about a special project that will begin in September. The Grand Lodge has contracted with Grand View Software to create a web-based database to manage our membership information. Grand View Software is a fully integrated platform that allows universal interaction through a secure web based portal. Permission for access is controlled by the Grand Lodge and allows Lodge and individual member levels of access. With all things, there is a cost involved. We made enough on our Harris Connect directory to pay for the first year. We have contracted with The Stanek Group, LLC to do a direct mail fundraiser to help secure funds for the second year. Please make a donation if you are able.

The annual meeting of the Grand Lodge is coming up November 15-16, 2016 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in downtown Montgomery. If you have never attended the Grand Lodge Annual Communication, you should consider doing so. If you are not a Lodge Officer with Grand Lodge credentials, you can be seated as a non-voting Master Mason.

You can bring a paid Lodge dues card and present it to the Credentials Committee on arrival. The Communication activities actually begin on Sunday, November 13th. All activities take place in

the Embassy Ballroom of the Embassy Suites Hotel.

A brief overview of the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge is as follows:

GRAND LODGE EVENT SCHEDULE

Sunday, November 13

- 2:00 p.m. Committee on Work Practice of the Third Degree
- 5:00 p.m. Religious Worship Service

Monday, November 14

- 9:00 a.m. Comm. on Work Exemplification of the Alabama Masonic Degree Rituals
- 7:00 p.m. Grand Lodge Banquet

Tuesday, November 15

- 9:00 a.m. Opening of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of F. & A.M. of Alabama
- First Session Business
- Lunch
- Second Session Business
- 5:00 p.m. From Labor to Refreshment for the day

Wednesday, November 16

- 8:00 a.m. From Refreshment to Labor
- Third Session Business
- Election of Officers
- Installation of Officers
- Closing of the 2016 Grand Lodge Annual Communication

RISING VIRTUE LODGE #4
DEDICATION

BY RON ANDRESS, PGM, GRAND TREASURER



The newly dedicated Rising Virtue Lodge #4

Rising Virtue Lodge was destroyed on 27 April 2011 by an F4 tornado that caused massive destruction in Tuscaloosa. Von Bayer Lodge #699 was also destroyed by this tornado and the two Lodges met and decided to merge into one lodge and rebuild.

It took two years of design and construction to build a Lodge that sits on a major road with high visibility. We wanted a lodge that would attract attention with its good looks and one that would serve the craft.

Rising Virtue meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7 p.m. Tuscaloosa York Rite Bodies meets here on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. Clara Blackman Chapter #167 OES meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7 p.m.

LIVING UP TO YOUR OBLIGATION AS
A MASON BY GREG DURR, MWGM

Brethren as I set here thinking about the past year as being your Grand Master, I find myself at a lost for words to express my feeling to you, for the honor that you the brethren of this great fraternity has bestowed on me. It has been my honor to represent you and the Grand Lodge of Alabama of Free and Accepted Mason. Brethren there has been some good times and some bad times, but I would have to say that there has been more good than bad. I encourage each of you to think about the obligations that we took to become a master mason. We are taught how we are to live our lives to become better men, but if we learn these obligations and their meaning, and then apply them to our everyday life, not only will we become better men, we will also become better fathers, better husbands, and better citizens. Brethren as I think back on the masonic trials we have had the past few years, if we had been living up to our obligations none of these brothers would have had to come before a masonic trial. Brethren I challenge each and every one of you to

think about your obligations when confronted with any decision that you will have to make, I assure you the chances of making the right decision is a lot greater when you do. Brethren keep up the good work, we are a long way from the finish line. Brethren we are a very critical time in our country, in the forty plus years that I was in law enforcement I have never seen this much civil unrest, and law enforcement being under attack for no reason, Brethren I truly believe the day is coming when we as Masons are going to have to take a stand. There is not a man living that has not thought what he would do to protect his family, law enforcement officers do it for people they don't even know. Brethren I would encourage each lodge to show their law enforcement personal that you as masons support them and are willing to stand with them. In closing I would like to say again thank you for allowing me to serve you as your Grand Master this past year. God bless each and every one of you, and my God continue to bless free and accepted mason where ever they may be.

NEW MASONIC TAGS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!!!
Show your Masonic pride and purchase a tag at your next renewal date.



GRAND LODGE OF F. & A.M. OF ALABAMA
P.O. Box 1070
MILLBROOK, AL 36054
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

GRAND LODGE OF ALABAMA CHARITABLE OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The Grand Lodge offers a number of Charitable Programs designed to provide financial assistance for Lodges and persons who apply and meet the qualifications as outlined by the requirements of the specific program. A basic description of the Programs available this year, is provided below. **Some programs have specific requirements that must be met for the applicants to be considered.** This information along with the all forms necessary to apply for these programs, can be found on the Grand Lodge website "Charitable Outreach Programs" page at www.alafreemasonry.org/committees/coprog/

MASONIC SCHOLARSHIP

The purpose for the Alabama Masonic Scholarship Program is to provide financial assistance to university, college, or technical school students. Preference will be given, but not limited, to applicants who have a father, stepfather, brother, uncle, grandfather, or step-grandfather who is, or was at the time of his death, a Master Mason in good standing in an Alabama Masonic Lodge.

Awards scholarships to eligible applicants for up to \$1000. The same individual cannot receive this grant in conjunction with Scholarship Matching Fund plan.

SCHOLARSHIP MATCHING FUND PLAN

The purpose for this part of the Charitable Outreach Program is to provide supplemental financial assistance to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge to encourage them to award a scholarship to a deserving student in their community. Local Lodges can apply for up to \$500 in matching funds on a first-come first-funded basis. Grants will not be approved to anyone receiving a COC Scholarship that year.

Matching Scholarship grants to a lodge will be for up to maximum of \$1,000 for the year. The maximum amount of money paid out per application cannot exceed \$500 and is subject to the availability of funds.

MATCHING RELIEF FUND

The purpose for the Matching Relief Funds Plan is to provide supplemental financial support to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge who undertakes to render monetary assistance to worthy, specifically named individuals, families, or group of people who reside within the jurisdiction of the Lodge submitting an application.

Lodge may make more than one application for Matching Relief Funds but cannot receive more than \$1,000 from this plan each Masonic year

YOUTH SPORTS MATCHING SPONSORSHIP PLAN

The purpose for the Youth Sports Matching Sponsorship Plan is to provide supplemental financial assistance to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge to encourage them to support community youth programs such as baseball, soccer, football, etc. Grants can be used for sponsorship of the team, team tournaments, or playoffs and for sponsor's signs.

Local Lodges can apply for one half of the sponsorship and tournament fee not to exceed \$500 in matching funds on a first-come, first-funded basis. Lodges can apply for one grant per year subject to the availability of funds.

GRAND MASTER'S EMERGENCY FUND

The Emergency Fund is expended under the direction of the Grand Master for the relief of distressed worthy Master Masons, their wives, widows, children and other dependent relatives who reside in their households. The Mason upon whose membership the claim is based **must** be or have been at the time of death and for four years prior thereto, a member in good standing in a subordinate Lodge of the Grand Lodge.

Lodge must submit, as their portion of the grant, a check for one third of the amount requested from the Grand Lodge but not more than \$250. The Grand Master may contribute up to three times the amount provided by the Lodge but not more than \$750.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The purpose of this plan is to assist our aging members and/or their dependents. It will allow local Lodges to identify and apply for grant (non-matching) funds to assist in providing devices or structures to allow beneficiaries to remain in their homes. This plan also assists our aging members and/or their dependents with monetary needs such as medical, prescription, utility bills, or other needs that have placed our members in financial straits.

Grant funds will be written for the amount requested by the Lodge but not exceeding \$1,500 total per Lodge on a first-come, first-funded basis. No one individual may receive Grants totaling more than \$1,500 maximum from the Social Services Plan per Grand Lodge year.

HOLLY GROVE LODGE № 323 CELEBRATES SESQUICENTENNIAL

BY BRO. K. A. CARPENTER, PM HELION №1



Photo by JD. Bro. Cody Putman

On Saturday, 20 Aug., 2016 the Brothers of Holly Grove Lodge No. 323 celebrated the one-hundred and fiftieth Charter anniversary (Chartered 6 Dec., 1866) of their handsome Lodge. This historic Lodge is situated in the pristine Paint Rock River valley, providing an unobstructed view of the fields and mountains in the community of Princeton, Jackson County (bordering Tennessee and Georgia).

Joining the Holly Grove Brothers in this grand celebration were the Most Worshipful Grand Master Greg Durr, Right Worshipful Junior Grand Warden Van Tidwell, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master Larry Hancock, and District Lecturer David S. Cooper (Dist. 1, Grp. 2). Also present were representatives of the following Lodges: Helion (Huntsville) Lodge No. 1, Bolivar (Stevenson) Lodge No. 127, Scottsboro Lodge No. 359, Gurley Lodge No. 521, Bridgeport Lodge No. 543, Section Lodge No. 565, and Bogart Lodge No. 882.

Event Master of Ceremonies, Bro. Ryan Putman (Sesquicentennial Chairman, Secretary, and Past Master), opened this memorable ceremony with an overview of the importance of Freemasonry in our nation's development, followed by a heart-felt welcome to his Brothers,

visitors, and their families. Junior Deacon Cody Putman presented a most informative power-point presentation of the history of early Freemasonry as well as that of Holly Grove Lodge. The charter Worshipful Master was the distinguished Baptist minister, Bro. Henry Hollis Horton. WM Horton's son, Henry Horton IV (born in Princeton), would become Governor of Tennessee (1927 – 1933). MW Past Grand Master, Judge Bro. Floyd Hambrick was also a member of this Lodge.

District Lecturer Cooper provided an overview of the development of Lodges in Jackson County. Past Worthy Matron Loretta Harris delivered a history of the Holly Grove Chapter of the Order of Eastern Star. Treasurer Billy Cagle presented a commemorative plaque from Holly Grove Past Masters to WM Robert Swafford.

MWGM Greg Durr delivered a memorable address regarding the contributions of Alabama Freemasons during Reconstruction. The contributions of Freemason's in the building this great nation are regularly noted. However, Bro. Durr's remarks addressed the leadership of Alabama Masons, such as Bro. Horton, in rebuilding a war-torn, economically, politically, and socially devastated Alabama following the Civil War (War Between the States). Bro. Durr later sat in the Lodge's Masters chair which was once the Most Worshipful Master's chair in the Grand Lodge Temple. This chair, and the general seating chairs, were obtained from the Grand Lodge by Holly Grove Lodge after the Grand Lodge moved from its Perry St. location in Montgomery in the 1960s. Following these ceremonies, an abundant banquet was enjoyed by the many Brothers and visitors.

RENAISSANCE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

us felt at the time. This was a rebirth of Masonry within ourselves, within the community and within the state. This was a signal that our fraternity desires more than, as one brother put it, to "eat, meet and retreat". We all hold a firm desire for excellence in our ritual, expansion of our masonic minds and knowledge and returning a respect to the fraternity that many feel has been lost.

At that time we submitted our petition, with the support of Helion Lodge #1 as a sponsor, to be the first lodge in this state to be granted a Dispensation to operate as a lodge, in over 30 years. The Grand Master happily signed this request and granted our dispensation which

was presented to us at our meeting on March 9th 2016 and Renaissance Lodge #933 entered the rolls of the Grand Lodge of Alabama as its newest lodge

Renaissance Lodge would like to take this time to thank all the brothers of Renaissance Lodge #933 for their dedication to the craft and to this lodge in particular. We would also like to thank the Grand Master for his Dispensation to operate and for Helion Lodge #1 for all their support over the last few months.

If you are interested in visiting Renaissance Lodge or want to find out more about Observant Masonry, visit us on the web at:

www.renaissance933.com

HORACE SPENCER STEWART PGT & GRAND TREASURER EMERITUS OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE F. & A.M. OF ALABAMA

Our beloved Brother Horace Spencer Stewart was born September 17, 1935 in Fairfield, South Carolina.

Brother Stewart received his Masonic Degrees at Stability Lodge № 29 in Paris, France. He was initiated an Entered

Apprentice Mason October 22, 1962, passed to the Degree of Fellowcraft December 17, 1962, and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on February 4, 1963.

He affiliated with Air Force One Lodge No. 889 on January 1, 1997. He served as its Worshipful Master 2000 – 2001 and later as Secretary and Treasurer, being elected Treasurer Emeritus on June 13, 2016. As is well known by all Alabama Masons, Brother Stewart was a very active, longtime member of many Masonic related and affiliated organizations. He served for 13 years as Grand Treasurer of the Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Alabama and was elected Grand Treasurer Emeritus on November 11, 2014.

Brother Spence Stewart will be greatly missed by all. He departed this Earthly Lodge for that all Perfect Glorious and Celestial Lodge above on August 23, 2016.

Friend and Brother, we bid thee a last, a long farewell. Thou art at rest from thy Labors: may it be in peace!

CORDOVA LODGE № 559

Grand Lodge Officers attended the Cornerstone Laying & Dedication ceremony at Cordova Lodge #559 on August 27, 2016.



■ GRAND LODGE TRIAL COMMISSION

BY BRO. LANE WEATHERBEE, PGM

I have spent many years on the Grand Lodge Trial Commission, most of them as chairman, and it never ceases to amaze me that so many lodges know absolutely nothing about the code provisions governing a Masonic trial.

Let me begin by telling you what I tell each lodge prior to the trial date: “There is no such thing as a good Masonic trial.” When a lodge votes to have a trial, that means the brothers are convinced that one of their members may be guilty of some form of un-Masonic conduct. At this point, the charges are only accusations, but in a vast majority of the cases, a guilty verdict is returned. After all, the lodge has investigated the charges and found that a trial was justified; but every defendant is entitled to his day in court.

The purpose of this article is to explain how the Trial Commission works and what is necessary to have a Masonic trial. At the present time, the Trial Commission consists of 10 members, two from each of our five groups. At the last Grand Lodge session, I introduced legislation that would increase the membership to 16. The chairman currently serves as one of the two members in his group. If a trial is ordered in his group, he only has one member to appoint to the panel that will not have a long drive for the trial. My proposal is to increase the membership to three commissioners from each group, plus the chairman who would serve “at-large.” This would give us 16 people to cover the entire state. By comparison, Georgia has more than 70. I would appreciate your support at the next Grand Lodge session? Now, on with the story.

So, how do you get started? First, READ THE CODE. Everything you need to know is clearly written. First, a Mason must prefer charges in writing. According to Edict 24.4, it is the “especial duty” of the Junior Warden to prefer the charges. He should read them aloud at a regular communication. The code allows him to appoint a committee to investigate the charges. While this is not an absolute requirement, I highly recommend it. The committee will investigate the charges and report its findings, usually at the next regular communication. If the committee needs more time, that is their option.

The committee will give its report and state if the charges are justified or unjustified. It is then up to the lodge to vote whether to have a trial. If they do not approve a trial, then the issue is over. This does not keep the complainant from filing further charges, but I have never seen this happen. If the lodge votes to have a trial, the brethren must decide to conduct the trial within the lodge or request the services of the Grand Lodge Trial Commission.

If the lodge wants to try the case, that is

their privilege, but the Master may request the assistance of a member of the Trial Commission. If it is a lodge trial, I strongly suggest this be done. The Trial Commission has been called in to re-try cases that a lodge has mishandled. Most Masons have never seen a Masonic trial and have only seen Matlock and Perry Mason in action.

In a lodge trial, the secretary has a lot to do. He must notify the entire membership of the date and place of the trial. The Master will appoint prosecution and defense counsels. A Trial Commission trial is spelled out in Article VII Sec. 3 of the Grand Lodge Constitution. The requirements of a Trial Commission trial are set forth in Article VII Sec. 2. Further information may be found in Edicts 23 & 24. On Page 165 of the Masonic Code, begins suggestions for trials and appeals. This is not part of the constitution or edicts, but can be very useful.

If I were to go through every step and “what if,” it would take up several pages of this edition. To save space, I repeat, READ THE CODE! I will attempt to answer some of the most often asked questions about Trial Commission trials. The one that usually comes up is, “How much does it cost the lodge?” Basically, nothing. This is a service provided by the Grand Lodge, and the only thing the Trial Commission asks is that the lodge provide lunch and have the building open by 11 a.m. The attorneys can interview their clients and witnesses from 11-12, have lunch at noon and the trial will begin at 1 p.m. This time frame has worked well in the past, but could be altered if there were some conflicting events. The lodge is also required to provide someone, usually the secretary, to record the proceedings. The trial panel will consist of three jurors, a prosecutor, a defender and a judge. How long does a trial last? It depends on the case, its complexity, the number of witnesses, etc.

A large majority of the cases are not appealed, and there is no reason for the lodge to keep the recording past the next Grand Lodge session. In the event of the appeal, a copy of the recording should be sent to the Grand Lodge, then forwarded to the Appeals and Grievance

Committee for review and its recommendations. Any Master Mason who feels aggrieved by a decision is entitled to appeal. Is there an authority higher than Appeals and Grievance? Yes. The Grand Master can impose a more severe penalty, dismiss a penalty or reduce a penalty. He may also overturn a conviction. The Grand Master is the final authority.

You may ask if the lodge members may attend a Trial Commission trial. No. The only people in the room are the trial panel, the defendant, the person recording the proceeding and the witnesses while they are testifying. At the end of the testimony, the trial is called to recess, and the jury is left to make its decision. After the jurors deliberate, the court is reconvened, the jury announces its verdict and, if the defendant is found guilty, the penalty. At that point the defendant is asked if he understands the penalty, and his right of appeal is explained. The verdict and the appeal process are also explained in letters to the defendant and the lodge.

In the case of a guilty verdict, what are the penalties? Only four penalties may be handed down by a Masonic trial jury. They are a reprimand, a definite suspension, an indefinite suspension and expulsion. The reprimand is written by the chairman or judge, sent to the District Lecturer, and he must read it to the defendant in open lodge. A definite suspension is a suspension for a specified length of time (30 days, five years, etc.) An indefinite suspension is different. It cannot be contingent on any future act. For instance, it could not be contingent on Bro. Jones paying Bro. Smith the \$500 owed him. In order to be re-admitted to the rights and privileges of Masonry after an indefinite suspension, the suspended person must apply to the Grand Master, and it is helpful for the person to have found a lodge that will accept him. The acceptance of a brother cannot be ordered by the Grand Lodge.

I hope I haven’t bored you with this story, but I would offer one final tip. There are Trial Commissioners in each group. If you anticipate a trial, contact them with any further questions you may have. They will always be glad to help.

STATE OF FREEMASONRY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

pontiffs, or kings, and we thrived. Even following the Morgan affair, we thrived.

Now, however, we are not thriving. With the exception of the somewhat insignificant challenge by radical fundamentalists in recent years, we have not faced any serious threat to our existence, and yet we have lost three quarters of our membership. Why have we become an almost invisible entity within American society?

If we are to restore credibility to this fraternity,

if we are to regenerate respect of society, then we will have to again attract the class of individual who will serve as an attractive force for others of vision, and if we are seeking a criteria to measure the lessening of the average quality of our composition, all we need to do is look at the marked increase in trials for un-Masonic conduct taking place in our Lodges and Grand Lodges. My brothers, when we restore the quality, we will restore the quantity.

WHAT MAKES A MAN A MASON?

BY BRO. BOB HICKMAN

The Masonry we practice today is not the traditional Masonry practiced by our ancestors. Masonry in Alabama was, for the most part, borrowed from the style performed in Kentucky. The ritual or work, as understood by early Masons, consisted only of the business of conferring the degrees. Lodges sometimes conferred multiple degrees on candidates during a single meeting, admitted candidates without a unanimous vote and even required members to state why they had voted against a candidate. The concept of standardizing “the work” was frequently discussed at the Grand Lodge meetings but did not become a realization until 1847 when it was reported that “nearly every

Lodge with its own peculiar notions of Masonry and hardly any two agreeing as to the manner and ceremony of initiating into the several degrees”. Masonry in Alabama had therefore existed for over 25 years before any formal action was taken to even standardize the ritual.

In the 1872 Grand Lodge Proceedings, the Grand Master ruled that: “It seems to me that the vote for advancement has nothing to do with proficiency. If a brother is elected to receive the Degree at the regular communication, and a time set for conferring the Degree, and the brother comes forward, and after undergoing an examination - if it be satisfactory, pass him or raise him, if not, tell him to qualify himself and come forward a second time.” This statement, and the current version of our edicts, are confusing and leave the reader to wonder what matters in the examination process if proficiency has nothing to do with the candidates advancement. Additionally, what defines an examination if no lesson was involved?

Masonry has evolved. In those early times, the Masons who initiated, passed and raised a man in a single meeting must have used a different criteria for determining the worthiness of a man. Certainly there was no test of a candidate’s ability to recite

a lesson. Somewhere in our past we must have used much different standards for the making of a Master Mason. We must now, with clear-eyed retrospect, determine why early Masonry was stronger in numbers and quality than we are today. Is it possible that in those classic years, men actually took the time and interest to know the men they brought into the fraternity? Do you think they would have said words (oftentimes heard today) to the effect: “let’s go ahead and initiate him and see how he works out”. Or even worse: “he will not really fit in now but given a chance he might come around”.

The basis for advancing a brother to the next degree has, in modern times, become synonymous with an examination using a verbal question and answer process. Therefore, the criteria of his advancement depends totally on a brother’s ability to recite the examination and nothing to

do with his character or his contributions to the lodge. This practice causes us to reject as many as 75% of the brothers we initiate because they fail to turn in the lesson. Yet they are masons and brothers and we cast them aside. Some men cannot recite the lesson after months of working with a teacher while others will turn in a lesson at the next meeting.

If we are so serious about using the lessons as a measure of a brother’s value, we should implement a test to evaluate a candidate’s ability to learn and repeat the test lesson prior to allowing him to petition a Lodge. If a man cannot recite our memory test adequately then why waste his time and money and our time by initiating him.

In conclusion, it is not a man’s ability to recite a lesson that makes him a Mason. It is his character and what is in his heart. This was the way masonry was practiced during the early days. If a man is good enough to be joined to us, be initiated and called a brother, then how can we deny him a greater membership because he does not recite the words of the ritual?

We must now, with clear-eyed retrospect, determine why early Masonry was stronger in numbers and quality than we are today.

MASONIC LIFE

WILL=RESULTS

BY VAN KEVIN TIDWELL, JGW

One thing that I truly believe in, in my adult life, is the will of human beings. I never gave it any thought in my younger years, but Masonry opened my eyes and made me a believer in the will of every human. The reason I chose this subject, “will” to speak on, is I believe that anyone can accomplish anything, as long as they have a will to do so. Often times, after a Master Mason degree is conferred upon a brother, I encourage him to learn his lesson on this degree. I also, take the opportunity to encourage anyone else in attendance to do so, if they have not already learned it. I tell them, that you are never too old to learn the lesson. I believe this, because I believe that anyone who has a “will,” will accomplish and succeed in all of their endeavors.

The meaning of will is; a strong desire or determination to do something. There are many examples of humans having a willfulness to succeed that had to overcome obstacles to be successful. To play in the NBA as a professional, anyone under 6’4” is considered under-size. Spud Webb, a 5’6” example of extraordinary athletic ability, still had to have a strong will to be successful in that league from 1985-1998. That’s right, for 13 years! We all can recall the movie about Rudy Ruettiger, a Notre Dame walk-on, who was grossly under-size, 5’6” and 165 pounds who had a will to play football for that university. I know of many business men, who have lost

Today we need Masons to step up and say “I Will”...

everything that they have worked for, because of unforeseen problems or situations that instead of giving up, they had a will to turn things around and become successful once again.

Today we need Masons to step up and say “I Will” have a positive impact on themselves, others and the Fraternity. We need brothers to learn the ritual, promote social intercourse within the lodges, plan growth ideas for their lodge, work on educating their communities about Masonry and doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Everyone does not need to say I want to do this, instead say, I will do this. Brethren, I believe one of the most self satisfying accomplishments in life, is to succeed in any endeavor that you are determined to accomplish. The feeling of having a will to do something and seeing it become reality. Every human has this talent; they just need to have the will to carry it out.



THE MASONIC MESSENGER

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To stay up to date on all the Grand Lodge and District news, please send all changes of address and membership status to your Lodge Secretary and become an E-M@son, just visit: www.alafreemasonry.org/emasons



RENAISSANCE № 933 BRINGS OBSERVANT MASONRY TO ALABAMA

BY BRO. CHAD RODRIGUEZ
RENAISSANCE № 933



Members of Renaissance Lodge № 933, which meets at Helion № 1

DRESSING FOR LODGE: THE ART OF LOOKING SHARP

BY BRO. DAVE BACON

Today I want to talk about something that hit me yesterday in a conversation [...] The art of looking sharp. Why I like to dress up for lodge.

Freemasonry is an amazing fraternity. Though some of us may not see eye to eye on everything, one thing is almost completely accepted amongst masons. Sport coat and tie, are typically minimal protocol for dress code to lodge.

I have to admit. When I began my journey a year ago, I considered wearing my regular shoes with a suit. I've long disliked wearing a suit, button up shirts, ties, or anything of that nature. Not because it's uncomfortable, simply because to me, it wasn't who I was. Now, as a master mason, I have since changed my outlook on the attire and have embraced it fully. Down to learning to the multiple style knots. Not to show off, or to be overly flamboyant; but because it's a sense of accomplishment. Dressing for lodge, to me, puts me in a good mindset. Its meditative. It gets me prepared to do the work at hand. Not just physically, but emotionally and mentally as well. Is the suit required to handle our duties? Absolutely not. However, if we do not take pride in our representation of ourselves and this fraternity, we can't reasonably expect others to do the same. Especially the uninitiated.

Putting on my suit makes me feel great. I'm sure in the 50s it may have been pretty acceptable for men to wear a suit for almost any occasion. Today, sadly, not so much. But, we can also use this to our benefit as free and accepted masons. If we met before lodge to have a monthly dinner at a local (sit down) food place, all of the brethren

dressed sharp, having some laughs, would surely grab the attention of onlookers. Its not just about appearance. But, when we dress well, we feel well. Not all brothers have the money to buy a really nice suit. I think we can all agree on that. But, if they express interest, setup a donation for them to go purchase one.

I personally feel that wearing a suit, puts me in a mindset that helps me stay focused and clear. I've enjoyed wearing a suit so much I try to wear mine as often as I can. Like I said before, it's not just about appearance. We could easily do our work without a suit. But why would we? We wouldn't go to a friend's formal wedding wearing jeans and a t-shirt out of respect for the occasion. So why do it for lodge? Sometimes is perfectly acceptable. Some lodges, like mine, have a themed night. We wear Hawaiian shirts on the first stated. I'm okay with that. I still choose to wear my suit. Not because I don't want to participate, but simply because I enjoy wearing my suit to lodge and don't feel right going without it. That's just me personally.

Take pride in your appearance; Because how we look going to lodge, could reflect how we are viewed by the uninitiated. Doesn't mean we will look less than normal. But me, I'd rather stick out as a sharp dresses man, than to fit in and look normal when going to lodge.

Again, to each his own. This Is my personal opinion on the dress attire of a brother for lodge.

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Beginning in December of 2015 an idea was beginning to take shape that would bring about an event that had not happened in this state in over 30 years.

The idea of a new lodge being chartered is one that is near and dear to the heart of every Freemason as it proves that our fraternity is growing and expanding Masonry within the state of Alabama. Also, it is the birth of an organization that many hope will last their lifetime and many more after that. This was the spirit that 21 brothers took as they began to look at what would ultimately become the newest lodge in the state of Alabama. However there was one small difference with this interest group and that was the idea of Observance.

Observant masonry is often looked at with skepticism, doubt and in some cases fear of what it might bring to the fraternity. With no existing observant lodges operating within our state we were all embarking on something new and exciting that we had seen in other states and heard about through word of mouth and online. All we knew was that a change was needed in the status quo and we felt that this could be the shot in the arm that many felt that Freemasonry in North Alabama was waiting on.

In December of 2015 Past Grand Master John Strickling sent out an email to many brothers that he had become acquainted with over the years and that he knew had an interest in observant Masonry. From that initial communication we formed a core group over the course of the next two months that would begin having regular planning meetings to being to form the framework of this proposed lodge.

Over the course of many hours, brothers such as PGM Gene Anderton, PM Jerry Burpee, PM Clairance Ballard and several others began to form the structure, by-laws, budget and operational concepts of a new lodge. Of course this was alien to all of us as this had not been attempted in recent memory. We discussed, we debated, we argued and we made compromise, but in the end the love for this fraternity and our desire to see this new lodge succeed won out over any personal desires or opinions we had and we were able to hold monthly planning meetings with the interest group to vote on and decide how we would move forward.

It was during one of these meetings that we voted on a name that we would all come to love and that is Renaissance Lodge. Renaissance, means literally "rebirth" and that is what many of

THE STATE OF FREEMASONRY IN NORTH AMERICA

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I have had great apprehension for many years in the direction that North American Freemasonry is traveling, and much of my writing and speaking has been reflective of that apprehension. I

am a great supporter of the Masonic Restoration Foundation and have been involved from the beginning with its creation and support for it operation. At the present time I see no programs on the horizon to offer any greater hope for survival of a viable Masonic institution in North America, than the creation of an "observant" style of Freemasonry.

We must be aware and recognize however, that this is not a panacea for all of our ills. One of the greatest obstacles that I have observed to our success today, is that we may present ourselves as superior to other Masonic operations, and in some cases there is justification to this thinking.

There are those who imply that we look at ourselves as an elitist organization. My brothers, there is nothing wrong with being elite. Freemasonry itself is an elite organization, but we must not allow ourselves to become arrogant or complacent with any success that we have achieved, for we have a long, long way to go. Many of us will never live to see the end result of what we are attempting to do but hopefully we can rest assured in the comfort of knowing we are doing something for our future.

I have been a member of Freemasonry for fifty-three years and have been a student of the Craft for the largest portion of those years. I have presided over eighteen Masonic bodies and have written book reviews on Freemasonry for twenty-five of those years. I served twenty years as grand secretary of the Grand Lodge, two years as a grand secretary for foreign relations, sixteen years as executive secretary of the World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges and am now honorary president ad vitam for that organization.

My brothers, what I have learned in that period of fifty-three years is just how little I know about this Craft. The experience however, has given me a unique opportunity to see Freemasonry with all its greatness as well as its foibles, its successes as well as its failures, its potentials for a great future as well as its potential for a less than great future. I have had the privilege of meeting some truly great men, but I have also watched men assume leadership positions who could have been great leaders, but who permitted their egos to destroy their legacy and diminish the very body they were leading.

What we are today is not what we were, and we were better in many ways than we are today. Our image was better, our influence was better, our vision was better, and based

upon our average quality of composition, our quality of composition, our quality was better. This observation is not meant to belittle the membership of today's Freemasonry, but we certainly are not attracting the great thinking minds or the visionary leadership that we once did.

It [was not long] ago that membership in Freemasonry was indicative of a success story. To be a member was a sign of acceptance by a segment of society [composed] of successful and respected men. Today, far too few professional men belong, resulting in an unfortunate dearth of visionary leadership.

There are leaders today promoting almost any change they deem necessary to increase numbers of members and who imply that American Freemasonry is stagnating due to a lack of willingness to change to fit into the modern-day world. My brothers, what we are now is a result of change.

American Freemasonry has probably changed more in the last thirty years than it has in the previous 250. Those changes have resulted in a catastrophic impact on the quality of the Craft as well as on the quantity. The loss of quantity has created an impact, simply because we have less funding to support our operations. The loss of quality, however, has impacted our own recognition of our purpose to exist.

It is long past due for us to recognize that all of the efforts that we have been placing on increasing numbers and raising monies for public charities has not benefited the craft. The time has come that we must become more introverted and concentrate our efforts to restoring the dignity, the image, and the respect that was bequeathed to us.

How long will we fail to admit that we have been following the same pathways of so many other fraternal organizations that led to their extinction? How long will we sit and watch our buildings crumble, our image decay, and our influence wane before we acknowledge that we must change our approach for survival?

Over the last thirty to thirty-five years we have divested the Craft of almost any intellectual

pursuit. The commandment that we should be a lover of the arts and sciences has been swept away in lodge meetings dedicated to mundane exercises totally irrelevant to the philosophical intent of Freemasonry.

We have failed to accept the fact that there is a cost to be a Freemason. In our ill-fated attempt to increase our numbers, we have kept our dues and fees absurdly low and now we wonder why we cannot even maintain our buildings. Over the last thirty years, loss of members through suspension and demit can be measured in the tens of thousands, and yet, to be suspended from Freemasonry in the past for nonpayment of dues was almost regarded as a "black mark on a man's soul." Masonic membership to them is no longer a priority. We have taken away the pride in saying, "I am a Freemason."

Our buy-in to the political correctness attitude that permeates our country, of the right of every man to have what every other man has, even to be a Freemason, regardless of his quality, we have changed in North America from being a predominantly "white-collar" fraternity to a predominantly "blue-collar" fraternity. This observation does not mean that the craft in the

past was composed of only the professional class; that would be denying our origins. One of the most renowned qualities of Freemasonry was its commitment to take men from all social classes and

set them in a lodge room as equals.

We cannot deny that our prestige as a fraternity was structured by great thinking men from the professional class. Society will always judge us by our composition.

Freemasonry has faced challenges to its existence almost since the time of its inception. Many of those challenges were serious, resulting in the Craft being outlawed in some countries, and over those several centuries, Freemasons have been put to death by the thousands simply for being Freemasons.

These challenges to our integrity as an institution generally originated with rulers, governments, and religious leaders. In each case we were looked upon as being a challenge to their right of domination. American Freemasonry was almost unique in that the only serious challenge we ever faced was during the Morgan affair. We did not have to deal with dictators,