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AND EVENTS TO PUBLISH IN THE  
NEXT ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER!  
DEADLINE IS MARCH 1ST

## THE MW GRAND MASTER'S YEAR IN REVIEW

BY JOHN C. MANNING, GRAND HISTORIAN

During this year, 2017, I am pleased to inform you that our Most Worshipful Grand Master Bobby Pitts, has been most active and dedicated to enhancing Masonry through his many visits to over 110 Lodges. He has driven over 20,000 miles through August, in faithful service of his office and all Masons in the State of Alabama.

Just to mention a few of his accomplishments, Bobby has visited many Lodges to raise candidates to the position of Master Mason, performing the work flawlessly. As our MWGM, Bobby has traveled to several states to represent Alabama in a most professional manner.

Further, he has directed that all Lodges be as charitable as possible within their respective communities, performing charitable acts to enhance the reputation and visibility of Masonry, thus enhancing requests for applications to our organization. In addition, there will soon be released an "Edict" that focuses on ensuring

that these candidates are of the highest caliber and of good reputation by emphasizing the need for thorough investigation of all applicants, including criminal records reviews. This mandate requires that future Master Masons continue to be of good repute and a credit to Masonry.

As Most Worshipful Grand Master, Bobby is continuing to work enthusiastically throughout the State, and most recently has dedicated a "Cornerstone" for a Lodge that lately underwent reconstruction. Lodge #22 has been in existence since 1842.

Through it all, Bobby has recently traveled to Washington D.C. where he received recognition for attaining the position of 33rd Degree. This is a most-vaulted and respected accomplishment.

As November draws near we can all stand assured and with much pride that our Grand Master expended every effort to make 2017 a most productive and accomplished year.

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



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# 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/](http://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.

# A PATH FORWARD

BY BRO. BOB HICKMAN

When Masonry converted from operative to speculative there was no such thing as a catechism which had to be learned to enable a brother to proceed from one degree to another. Many locations, including Alabama, routinely conducted three degrees in a single day. During these numerous generations Masons used somewhat standard rituals to initiate, pass and raise brothers. The real Masonic secrets (as defined by the "Ancient Landmarks") were provided to the candidate during the ceremony or immediately afterwards.

Sometime in the late 19th century, Masons across America began adopting requirements for brothers initiated, passed or raised to learn and recite an oral lesson prior to the performance of their next degree. Alabama chose not to require a raised brother to "turn-in" his master Mason lesson but did require that he turn in an EA and FC lesson.

During the late 20th century, some states began to question the value of learning and reciting lessons. Many realized the difficulty in teaching lessons because of time limitations, a lack of qualified instructors and the unfortunate reality that some good men simply do not have the ability to learn and recite long lessons. Ultimately, these states took steps to change their oral lesson requirements.

Today Masonry in the state of Alabama is faced with a dim future. In 2014 our Grand Lodge published a document which stated that almost 50% of our brothers initiated in Alabama were never passed on. This data was based on numbers collected from 1980 to 2013. If more recent data was evaluated, (for example only the numbers in this century) this percentage would increase considerably. As a result of our current practices we are losing a vast majority of those initiated because they will never complete their EA lesson. To further complicate an already dire situation, the number of men being initiated is declining dramatically.

Additionally, the number of lodges and members is declining across the state. The average age of a Mason in Alabama in 2014 was 64 and 45% of all Masons were over 68.

Unfortunately, the practice of placing so much emphasis on the ability to recite work has taken the place of the qualities of leadership, the ability to manage and character among some senior members of our fraternity and we are suffering accordingly.

Statistics shown in the 2014 Grand Lodge report projected that by 2030 the population of

Masons in Alabama will be about 10,000; down from our current 24,000. Perhaps it is time to reevaluate our current practices since our present course is only leading to failure. By looking around and observing how other states are dealing with similar problems, several options can be offered.

First, an obvious answer is to consider reevaluating the process a brother must go through to travel through the degrees. This could be accomplished by changing the reciting requirement in some form. Code books are currently used by many states to allow instructors and students to teach and learn more quickly. It also allows students to study without an instructor present. Of course the Masonic secrets as defined by the "Ancient Landmarks" are never included in any public document and are only transmitted by word of mouth.

Other states have deleted the requirement to learn lessons altogether and adopted written study packages which must be completed before a brother could receive the "Ancient Landmarks" secrets or be moved on to the next degree. Most of these programs involve written tests. Some locations also require the composition of a written paper explaining the Masonic knowledge gained by the brother after each degree. Study guide documents enable students to learn the history

*...the number of lodges and members is declining across the state. The average age of a Mason in Alabama in 2014 was 64 and 45% of all Masons were over 68.*

study packages which must be completed before a brother could receive the "Ancient Landmarks" secrets or be moved on to the next degree. Most of these programs involve written tests. Some locations also

of Masonry, the meanings of Masonic tradition and what is expected of them as Masons in a standard manner. Alabama currently has no method to teach these subjects either formally or informally. A good example of such a system has been in use for over 10 years by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. When properly performed this program works to achieve their goal of producing good and knowledgeable Masons. They also place greater emphasis on the performance of degrees to ensure the candidate is significantly impressed with the ceremony and the fraternity.

Lessening the advancement requirements is however not without disadvantages. Iowa has experienced a greater requirement for their investigating committees to perform their duty in a more competent manner as every man they initiate could very well become a master Mason. Also, if we were to make such changes, there would be serious disharmony among our brothers who believe the catechism is the cornerstone of Alabama Masonry.

Lastly, we can always choose to do nothing.

It is time to do something! Our present course will only lead to our eventual demise. We must encourage our Grand Lodge to formally address these problems, study and evaluate other states programs (such as the one in Iowa) and develop a route forward.

Any choice we make must emphasize improving the quality of the men we select to be Masons. Masonry is supposed to be about quality and high standards, not reciting ability.

## LIGHT IN FREEMASONRY

BY DREW BARNETT, DISTRICT #31 LECTURER

Light in Masonry. Those words convey a certain stirring of the soul in us. We may constantly learn in our craft if we question the teachings and delve into the meaning of the ritual work.

As Masons, we are taught very early in our quest for light "never to daub with untempered mortar". In operative Masonry, the actual laying of brick, block, or stone, the meaning of this is clear. If your "mud", or mortar mix, is too wet, the bricks will not hold together. The mud will ooze out and the wall will sag and eventually fall. If the mud is too dry, it will crumble and fall out of the joints between the bricks. Again, the wall will fall. To get the mud to the correct temper the Mason must add more dry mortar mix or more water. When the mud is correctly tempered, the wall will stand indefinitely.

What about the "light" that we are supposed

to receive from this admonition? What is the lesson to be learned? If we look into the past, we can find the answer. To the people of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the word "untempered" had a whole different meaning. If someone was said to be untempered, it meant that they were braggarts, that they were boastful and arrogant, that they considered themselves above their peers. We see this behavior today in the huge egos of politicians, sports figures, business czars, actors, and, unfortunately, some Masons. This was a term of derision in the days when our rituals were written.

When this phrase is taken in this context the meaning is abundantly clear. Brethren, there is no place for this type of behavior in Masonry. We are all on the same level. We are all equals. We are all Brothers. Always remember never to daub with untempered mortar.

# QUALITY LIGHT

BY RON ANDRESS, PGM

From the first degree that we all took, we have been in a constant search for light. As we all know, light comes in many forms and colors. The light that we are searching for is true light or knowledge – not a false light.

The oil lamp has represented education for a long time. Several years ago, I was asked to talk to an elementary school about the importance of education during their formative years. I was trying to figure out a way to communicate to them in a manner that would be easy for them to understand the symbolism of light with knowledge, so I used the following story.

Just imagine that you have gone on a camping trip with several groups of your friends, and now it has gotten dark and you want to visit some of your friends at the next campsite. The path to their campsite is full of exposed tree roots and other trip hazards. If you had a flashlight with good batteries, there would not be a problem. With a flashlight that had bad batteries, you would not even attempt the trip, but if you had a flashlight with batteries that were weak, producing a dim light, you might attempt to visit your friends, and possibly stumble in the dark and get hurt.

Now let us change the situation to knowledge and having a task to accomplish. With the proper knowledge, there is not a problem, and if you have no knowledge about the task, then you would probably not attempt the task. But, if you have a little knowledge, then you might attempt it with possible disastrous results.

Now that we understand the principle of equating light with knowledge, let us revisit the oil lamp. Each of us has their own oil lamp to light their pathways of life. It is up to each of us to get as much oil as necessary from our parents, teachers and our own personal experiences to fill our lamps with the oil needed for the rest of our lives. Everyone we meet and associate with puts a little bit of oil in our lamp.

In the Fellow craft degree we are taught that a point is a position without magnitude. A line is a point continued and a figure of one dimension, namely length. A superficies is a figure of two

dimensions namely length and breadth. A solid is a figure of three dimensions, namely length breadth and thickness.

First we see a point of light, then a beam, and then a solid sphere of light. Is this enough to consider? Is this all there is to our accumulation of knowledge?

I say no, my brothers. We have looked at only the three dimensions that the Blue Lodge teaches us about. We must look further. Remember that I said earlier that it is up to each of us to put enough oil in our lamp to last our lifetimes. This is the fourth dimension, also known as the elapse of time. As

we look further, we will discover that this knowledge is not just for our lifetime, but the lifetimes of those that follow us, and are dependent upon us to provide them with the oil for their lamps.

The knowledge that comes from the accumulation of knowledge passed down through the ages; we cannot be the weak link in the chain that breaks and loses that knowledge.

We have now looked at light or knowledge in four dimensions. Is this the final analysis of our light that we are communicating?

Again, my brothers, I say no, for there is another aspect of light or knowledge that we have yet to look at. We have not looked at the quality of our light. In an oil lamp, the brightness of light is affected by the quality of the oil used in the lamp and the manner that the wick is trimmed.

Light comes in many different colors and temperatures. There is cool light, warm light, day light, moon light, candle light and way too many more to try to mention. But the light that we are searching for is true light or true knowledge. We do not need light that has gone through a filter, prism, or any other light distorting device.

Just as the light should not be distorted, so should our knowledge that we pass on not be distorted. The quality of the knowledge that we pass on could very well define Masonry in the future. Will the wick be trimmed correctly and at the correct height? Will our oil be high quality oil

SEE 'QUALITY LIGHT' ON PAGE 6

## A NEW TYPE OF LODGE? VISIT TO AN OBSERVANT LODGE

BY BRO. JERRY BURPEE  
RENAISSANCE #933

The first thing you notice is that you enter the lodge thru a candle lit ante-room with a skull and bowl of water resting on a table. You are instructed to cleanse your mind by symbolically washing your hands. You then walk into a darkened lodge with incense burning and soft music playing. Men are scattered about the lodge dressed in tuxedos or dark suits wearing white gloves, sitting in silence, many with their eyes closed in deep meditation. Promptly at six, the Marshall summons the top three officers to their stations. From there business is conducted the same as all other lodges throughout the great state of Alabama with the exception that roll is called of the members, there are no electronic devices out, all conversations are directed to or thru the Master, and when individuals talk to the Master, they give the due guard. At the closing of Lodge, you notice that the Master closes it using verbiage you recall seeing in the monitor. After Lodge you go with the brethren to a local establishment. The meal is enticing as are the conversations. Throughout the evening a Director of Ceremony introduces individuals to give different toasts, which the brethren ceremoniously participate in. Your favorite toast is given promptly at 9:00 where absent brethren that could not be present can toast with their brethren at this Festive Board. At the end of the evening you feel that this is a semblance of what you thought Masonry might have been like many years ago, and though you liked it, you love your mother lodge and vow to carry some of the evening experiences to your home Lodge.

An observant lodge does not have to be exactly like the foretold story. Observant Lodges are growing in membership across the country while many lodges are seeing sharp membership declines or low attendance and participation. It is easier to convert an existing lodge into an observant type lodge than it is to start a new lodge and it can be done with no or minimal cost. For more information, visit the Masonic Restoration Foundation website:

[www.Masonicrestorationfoundation.org](http://www.Masonicrestorationfoundation.org)

You are also welcome to visit Alabama's first Observant Lodge, Renaissance #933. We meet on the second Wednesday of every month at Helion Lodge in Huntsville. We recommend that you give us 72 hours' notice to ensure your dinner reservations. Show up at 5:40 so you can experience the 'Moment of Reflection', Lodge starts at 6:00. Dress for visitors is a dark suit or tuxedo. Inquire at [www.renaissance933.com](http://www.renaissance933.com)

## 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](http://www.alafreemasonry.org/eMasons)





# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MASON?

BY JOHN R. STRICKLING, PGM

Masons: Brick and Block layers, Stone Masons; Master Masons, Master Builders

The operative Masons (stone Craftsmen) were the basis of the foundations of our fraternity; as Master Craftsmen or Journeymen it was their duty and responsibility to mentor the Apprentices; teaching and instructing them to be not only Craftsmen, but honorable men. They learned by example not only how to deal fairly with one another, but how to interact with society, being seen as good men and true.

The Nobility, the politicians, the wealthy, the Doctors and Lawyers were invited to belong as an honor, and it was truly an Honor for them to be invited to associate with these Craftsmen.

There are some who may say that the Fraternity has lowered their standards as to the quality of its membership, but our heritage is that of the workmen, the Craftsmen, the builders. Quality should be judged on character not material possessions or one's station in life. A Craftsman of any discipline who puts in a hard days work has equaled any individual on earth who works for his daily bread. Freemasonry is made up of men who are the every day people of our Country. We are America. Masons are a complex mix of our society, the glue that holds our Masonic traditions. We should always remember that it truly is the internal and not the external qualities that make the good man.

Our country, our society has changed significantly over the past 60 years and due to its complexity and size will continue to evolve. Being a member of the "baby boomers", born in 1947, I have witnessed this first hand. To me personally, some of the change has been good, but quite honestly, some I have wished would never have happened. None the less, change happens and it can't be ignored and won't go away. Looking at the change in our Fraternity over the past 45 years since becoming a member; I have witnessed the decline not only in membership, but the esteem we once enjoyed. The public's perception of the Fraternity, especially the younger generation has also declined. Proof of this is the fact that as of 2015 only ten percent (10%) of our membership was under the age of 35. We must start being proactive to correct these perceptions and strengthen our image.

My Pastor delivered a message in Sunday Service recently and he made the following statement "When we believers arrive in Heaven; those of us who speak English and are white will be in the minority. Christians are from every country on this earth, speak different languages and are of different races". There are times that I feel that I have failed, but with God's help and continued

guidance I strive to look at a man's character, attitude and behavior before making any type of judgement on him; truly trying to evaluate his internal qualities, not his external. How can we dislike or hate an individual we don't know? We can not and should not, judge an individual simply because of the fact their outward appearance is different than our own. In the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, verse 27: "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he them; male and female created he them." It is worth noting that the Bible says "image" and nothing about "color". We will all be judged someday on our actions in this life and when we stand before God's Throne he will be looking at our internal qualities and actions, not the external. How we feel at that moment?

Our Constitution requires that a man express a belief in God, be at least twenty-one years of age and be of good moral character to be accepted into the Fraternity. Let us truly look at the internal qualities of men who wish to apply for membership and not their external appearance.

Ask yourself this question: Would the Nobility, the wealthy, the professionals, still consider it a great honor to be invited to belong to this Fraternity?

Having traveled extensively through the State of Alabama while in Grand Lodge Line, I know

that we have an outstanding group of Masons in this State. It is my hope that they will step up, step forward and help to preserve this Fraternity for future generations. Of all the bad things we see and hear on Television and various news outlets it is past time for all good men, regardless of religion, race or origin to bind together to be a visible living, breathing example of how men are to lead their lives, act honorably and to be good men and true to their families, God and Country.

Be proud of your profession, your craft. Be proud to be a Mason!

In closing I would like to refer you to Psalm 118 verses 22 and 23:

*"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes."*

The Corner Stone is the first stone set in the construction of a Masonry foundation and is important since all other stone will be set in reference to this stone thus determining the quality and integrity of the entire structure. Just as the Operative Mason taught his Apprentices, so should we as Speculative Masons teach our Entered Apprentices and membership, by our own individual examples, to be the Corner Stones of their families, Communities, State and Country.

As Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone of my faith, let us strive to live by his example.

## GENTLEMEN 101

On April 4, members of the Locust Fork Masonic Lodge #481...took the opportunity to provide five Locust Fork High School male students an informative and hands-on class entitled Gentlemen 101.

Members of the Masonic Lodge believe this class to be a valuable asset to the community. The concept is to teach the art of modern chivalry and proper etiquette to young men of good character. Mason Jimmy Callaway said Lodge #481 wants this to become an annual event, as many young men do not know "how to be a gentleman."

Two of the high school seniors, Mason Long and Spencer Clements, had the opportunity to pair off with a younger Mason for conversation as they enjoyed a hearty ... meal. A discussion of table manners, dining etiquette and future plans was incorporated into this dinnertime event. The three other students, who were unable to attend the mealtime experience, were able to meet with a Mason and have extensive discussion regarding "how to be a gentleman."

Danya King, introduced as "the Southern lady with elegance," offered the young men important advice such as, "Be a grown up. Own up to your



Above: Members and volunteers from Locust Fork #481 actions. And, no means no!" As community members, she and her husband, Past Master Brett King, have these same high expectations for their children when they begin dating.

Mason Bart Blalock reminded the attendees, "Make sure your date is taken care of first. Everything is about her. Your date is your priority. She is special. We are the pawns."

Both Long and Clements believe they learned some valuable information from this class. Clements said, "This class was very helpful. I realized I've made a lot of mistakes." Mistakes he plans on correcting as the prom approaches. While this initial Gentlemen 101 class faced some challenges, it is believed to have been successful.

The Masons simply want to make "good men better men." By holding events such as this, there is a good possibility this will happen.

*\*Edited and reprinted from April 12, 2017 Blount Countian*

# ARE YOU REALLY A MASONIC LODGE?

BY FRANK W. LITTLE, PGM

I base this opinion on my experience of having served this fraternity as District Lecturer, Secretary and Worship Master of my lodge, having served on several Grand Lodge Committees, and four years in the Grand Lodge line, one of which as your Grand Master.

In 2006, I asked the Education and Public Relations Committee to conduct a workshop in each of the five Masonic Groups in Alabama. Among the topics of discussion was becoming "Visible in your Community"

I created a power point presentation with a number of ideas for becoming visible in order for people in the community to know there was an active Masonic Lodge in the community and who those Masons were. One of my points was; Why do men want to join an organization that meets in a building with no windows and is never seen doing anything outside that building or even who those men are. Unfortunately, the workshops were poorly attended and our efforts fell on deaf ears. What is the cause of poor attendance and little to no visibility in the community you ask; The three deadly and very effective enemies of Freemasons in Alabama - Apathy, Indifference and Selfishness.

In 1998 I was a young, inexperienced, Worshipful Master of my lodge, one of our members died and the family requested a Masonic Funeral. I was disappointed to learn

that no one in my lodge could do the service. I asked the question "Are we really a Masonic Lodge" if we can't even bury our own members. Why do we have to get someone from another lodge to do our work? What does that say about our character and integrity? I was initiated, passed and raised in the spring of 1996. I never received the EA or MM lecture in my lodge. The three deadly enemies had struck again. Were we really a Masonic Lodge?

*The three ... enemies of Freemasons in Alabama - Apathy, Indifference and Selfishness.*

I am often asked to install officers at lodges around central Alabama. My vanity would like me to think it is because I am a Past Grand Master and I do realize there is responsibility with that title however I ask the same question; Are you really a Masonic Lodge if you can't even install your own officers? Ah the three enemies have again slipped past the Tiler.

Again, I am often asked to deliver the EA and MM lectures. I have found that it is not because of my dedication and love of the ritual but because no one in the lodge knows the lectures. Are you really a Masonic Lodge if you can't even give your own candidates the lectures? Do you think he is impressed that a visitor has to do the lectures? Have the three enemies struck once again?

While visiting a lodge I unintentionally upset the Worshipful Master as he was discussing an upcoming "fundraiser" for the lodge. I innocently asked how the proceeds would be used. His

reply was "we have to have a fundraiser each year to pay our bills" Sometimes my mouth goes in gear before my brain and I asked why they were asking the community to support the lodge? In my opinion as Masons we should operate our lodge with the proper dues structure. Monies raised from "fundraisers" should go back into the community. What a positive message this would send to the community. Why would a man want to belong to an organization that can't even support itself? Are you really a Masonic Lodge if the community has to help you pay the light bill? Oh, we will lose members if we raise our dues! Again, the three enemies have delivered their venom with stealthy accuracy.

I received three calls one week from three different lodges asking for me to come "raise" a brother to the sublime degree of Master Mason. I love the ritual and constantly try to maintain my proficiency and was in hopes that these three lodges wanted me because of my dedication to the ritual. However, I was wrong, they didn't have anyone at their lodges that could do the work. For the last time, I remind you that unless lodges "step up to the plate" and learn to do their own work without depending on someone else they will continue to a "social club" and not a Masonic Lodge worthy of the dignity the title demands.

I can see the excuses piling up as to why lodges can't or won't do their own work. None are valid! It's not your fault and it's everyone's fault. The three enemies have struck again! Are you really a Masonic Lodge?

## QUALITY LIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

that does not emit a lot of smoke? Will there be enough oil in the lamps of those that we teach to last them and their successors?

We must not only temper the light so that it is a true undistorted light, but also to insure that it is not too bright so that it is not a blinding light. Sometimes we can give out information in a way that it cannot be easily understood by our intended audience. Just as I adapted my presentation of light to the school in a way that they could easily understand, we must make sure that we present our information in a manner that it will be clearly understood without confusion.

If we go back in time to a movie that I enjoyed very much, and borrow a phrase that is very appropriate to the subject; the warden in the movie Cool Hand Luke said, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." If we fail to communicate, that means that we put the information out, but it was not understood.

In the Army, we had many different types of orders. We had standing orders, written orders,

verbal orders, movement orders and implied orders. All of the orders were in a certain format except for the implied orders, and these were always dangerous, because you had to assume that the recipients of the written orders would understand that there were implied orders contained within the written orders.

Let us not run the risk of giving knowledge which contains something implied, it is far too dangerous. We need to make sure that the information that we are communicating is fully understood and correct.

I mentioned earlier that we had to be careful not to produce a blinding light, but to adjust it to our audience. The candidates of today receive information in a lot of different formats. Most of them are of some electronic means. If we are to reach more of these young men, we need to concentrate our efforts on producing information about the craft in these type formats. We all saw what the two films of recent years produced in way of interest of our craft. Even though they were

not accurate depictions of our beloved order, we still received new members because of them.

Finally, I would like to talk about keeping and nurturing the members that we have. Interesting programs presented in lodges to not only give information, but to provide some form of entertainment. This could be accomplished by our Masonic education committees forming libraries of good quality video media that lodges could check out for use in the various lodges throughout the state.

I have taught many university students in the past ten years, and the two major things that I learned from them is that they want to learn their lessons in the traditional methods, and that they all have a deep thirst for knowledge.

Let us not fail these young brothers or our great Fraternity by not providing them with the best light that we can communicate. We must give true, bright, tempered, and focused light that will last throughout the ages.

*Presented May 12, 2017 at Ashmole York Rite College*



# THE MISSISSIPPI MOUNTAIN MAN DEGREE

## DISTRICT NEWS & EVENTS

BY VAN KEVIN TIDWELL, SGW

Back on April 29, 2017, I had the pleasure to be invited to attend Antioch Lodge #549, in Bruce, MS. They had two young men that were raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. I received a very warm welcome, superior meal, brotherly love and a performance from the Mississippi Mountain Man Degree Team.

The Mountain Man Degree Team, in attendance, consisted of two Past Grand Masters and several current and past Grand Lodge Officers. This was the first time I have been able to attend a Mississippi degree and was impressed with the performance. The Mississippi Mountain Man Degree Team impressed me, not only with the degree, but the regalia that they adorned to perform the degree.



Above: Members of the Mississippi Mountain Man Degree Team in regalia along with those raised to Master Mason.

Many hours and much effort were dedicated to make this team look like true mountain men in times past.

## VALLEY LODGE #516 SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATION

BY JAMES B. JONES, PM, VALLEY LODGE #516



On August 7, 2017, Valley Lodge #516, along with the Grand Lodge of Alabama, presented a scholarship to Josh Etherton. The scholarship was presented by Bro. Jerry Ogletree and W.M. John DeNigris. Josh recently graduated from Valley High School and was accepted to Auburn University where he plans to major in Forestry.

## ALABAMA REPRESENTED AT THE GEORGE WASHINGTON MASONIC NATIONAL MEMORIAL

In April, Alabama put up a display at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia. Bro. Wayne Sirmon of Mobile Lodge #40 created the display, which is pictured below. Also, Right Worshipful Brother Van Tidwell, Senior Grand Warden, was recently appointed as a Memorial Ambassador for a three year term 2017-2020 by the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association. The major role of the Memorial Ambassador is to inform the Brethren, and the public, about the Memorial and to secure support for it.


## 147TH MASONIC CELEBRATION

BY VAN KEVIN TIDWELL, SGW

On June 24th of this year, the 147th Annual Masonic Celebration took place in Florala, AL. Fidelity Lodge #685 hosted the celebration with a number of Masonic activities. A newly made Master Mason was raised on the 23rd, Fidelity Lodge and surrounding Lodges were installed by the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Alabama, Bro. Bobby Pitts and the annual parade closed the celebration on the 24th.



Pictured above is Most Worshipful Grand Master Bro. Bobby Pitts, who also served as the Grand Marshall of the parade, Garrett Pitts (Grand Masters Grandson) and driver, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master Bro. Ron Andress, GT. Kudos to every member of Fidelity Lodge #685 and all responsible, for another successful celebration!



### Service Through Education

Masonic organizations in Alabama have always given encouragement and practical aid to the educational endeavors of the children, not only of their own members, but of the entire community. The subordinate lodges and the Grand Lodge have contributed liberally to a variety of educational undertakings.

Prior to the Civil War, before the establishment of a state supported public school system, several Masonic lodges founded and furnished the necessary financial support for schools, usually called academies or institutes, both for boys and for girls, in different parts of the State. At least 13 lodge supported schools have been identified.


"Auburn Masonic Female College," "Dadeville Masonic Seminary," and Selma's "Central Masonic Institute" have unmistakable fraternal ties. Less obvious, but also sponsored by Freemasons are the "East Alabama Female Institute" located in Talladega and "Union Female College." In 1893 three organizations joined forces to establish this nonsectarian school of higher education for women chartered by the Masons, Odd Fellows and Sons of Temperance of Effulsa.

Three of these schools have left buildings that stand as monuments to the efforts of over 150 years ago. Central Masonic Institute stands today as the local historical museum. The building that housed the East Alabama Female Institute now serves as part of the campus of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind while the chapel of the Auburn Masonic Female College has been relocated and now serves the educational needs of students at Auburn University's Long Hall.

During the first half of the 20th century, the young people who lived at the Masonic Home were provided with a first class education which included the cost of college or vocational training following high school.

Seeking to meet the educational needs of Alabamians in the 21st century, the Charitable Outreach Committee began to award college scholarships in 2007. Additional money is earmarked as matching money for local lodge scholarships. To date \$600,000 has been distributed with over \$200,000 made available for local lodges. Adding the local lodges' contributions, in the past 20 years Alabama Masons have funded over one million dollars in scholarships. Student applications require a masonic sponsor, but any Alabama student may apply.

### Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons ALABAMA



### Acts of Charity

Building on the legacy of the Alabama Masonic Home, the Freemasons of Alabama strive to meet the needs of the families of our fraternity as well as members of our communities.

Established in 1913, The Masons of Alabama created a Home in Montgomery that would provide for the well-being of orphans, widows and destitute masons. It was situated on 276 acres just east of the city, and by the end of its first year of operation, 28 children, 18 women and 7 men were residents. Twenty years later in housed over 400.

The average age of the residents of the Home increased and in 2002 the 29 residents were relocated to skilled nursing facilities across the state. The Masons of Alabama pay the cost of private rooms, as well as all doctor visits, eye care, dental, clothing and any other needs. This care will be provided as long as the 4 remaining resident live.

The Grand Lodge Charitable Endowment Fund was created at the beginning of the 20th century and has grown to over \$12 million. After meeting all of the needs of our remaining Masonic Home residents, this fund supports a number of charitable projects including scholarships, social services and disaster support programs. Another \$100,000 is available as part of matching funds for the local lodge programs in the areas of scholarships, youth sports, and member assistance.

Alabama is also invested in operating the popular "Child Identification Program" which is a comprehensive child identification program designed to give families a measure of protection against the ever increasing problem of missing and abducted children. The program uses an Amber Alert compatible number due to provide their child's critical information to the parents. This program is provided at no cost to the families or event sponsors.

### Honoring Washington

The Grand Lodge of Alabama has honored the memory of George Washington in a variety of ways. Throughout the 200 years of Freemasonry in Alabama there have been four lodges which selected "Washington" as their name.

One of the first masonic lodges established in what was then the Alabama Territory carried the name of our nation's first president. Washington Lodge No. 23 was chartered in 1818 by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee. Located in Hazel Green, 4 miles south of the Alabama-Tennessee border, the lodge declined to participate in the creation of the Grand Lodge of Alabama and continued to operate as a Tennessee lodge until it surrendered its charter in 1825.

The Grand Lodge of Alabama granted permission for the masons of Greensboro to organize Washington Lodge No. 17 in 1822. Although this lodge survived only 3 years, Greensboro saw the chartering of Lafayette Lodge No. 26 the next year. This lodge continued to support the principles of Freemasonry until it consolidated with nearby Demopolis Lodge No. 49 in 1895.

No sooner had Washington Lodge No. 37 surrendered its charter than a new George Washington Lodge No. 24 was organized 30 miles away in Clinton. This lodge served the masons of Greene County until well into the 20th century. In 1936, another group of Alabama masons honored the "Father of our Country" when they established Washington Lodge No. 36 in Tusculum. This lodge remains active today.

In 1840 the Grand Lodge of Alabama adopted a resolution to contribute \$200 and a block of Alabama marble to be donated to the Washington National Monument Society to aid in the completion of the Washington Memorial. After engraving, the marble block was delivered in 1851 and is installed at the 140 ft. level.

Alabama was a strong supporter of the creation and operation of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Grand Master Lawrence H. Lee was an initial member of the 1913 "George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association" serving as the association's first Secretary.

More recently, Past Grand Master Roger A. Simmon served as a Director and Officer of the Association culminating with his election as President for 2012-2013.

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](http://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!!

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE RELIEF OF...

BY DAVID HOWARD, GJD

The officers and membership of Howard E. Palmes Lodge #917 in Mobile would like to thank our local brotherhood and community in supporting our two community centered charitable fundraisers. Both were complete successes, and we were able to meet our goals for each fundraiser.

This past spring it was brought to our attention of a little girl named Cassie who was battling a rare form of bone cancer. Our lodge decided to try to help the family with some of their financial obligations by raising money through a smoked meat fundraiser. We were able to raise around \$2600 from the meat sale and along with a generous donation from our brothers at Howard Lodge #69 we totaled approximately \$3000. We also took advantage of the Grand Lodge of Alabama's matching fund plan which empowered us to present a final total of \$4000 to Cassie's family. We were informed recently that she is currently cancer free after her treatments.

Also, a local policeman and brother recently discovered he had an aggressive form of pancreatic cancer. Due to the type of cancer he is forced to travel to the Houston, Texas area for treatment which escalates his costs due to the additional travel expenses (lodging and meals). Our lodge elected to do a charitable fundraiser on his behalf this past Labor Day weekend. We dedicated the proceeds of this first fundraiser of the new Masonic year toward his relief. We are happy to say that through the support of our community we were able to raise and present to him a check for \$1000. It is a small amount compared to the financial challenges he faces during the treatment of this disease, but hopefully it will provide some relief in the form of peace over his travel costs. Another lodge in the area is also planning to help this brother financially and take advantage of the Grand Lodge of Alabama's matching fund plan which is why we could not at this time due to the rule of once per year per person.

All in all, we had a successful fundraising campaign, but it could not have been done without support from our local community as well as support from our local Masonic brothers and affiliated sisters. Thank you very much for your help.

## 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 give you an update on our new Grand Lodge database. The Grand Lodge has contracted with Grandview Software to create a web-based database to manage our membership information. Grandview 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. We are in the process of signing on all the Lodge secretaries. Jeff Clarke, from Grandview, will be at our Grand Lodge session this year. We will have a secretaries' meeting on Monday afternoon after the Committee on Work session. Jeff will be doing a training session and will answer any questions you may have. I hope you all will be able to be there.

The annual meeting of the Grand Lodge is coming up November 13-15, 2017 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. In order to be admitted you must bring a paid Lodge dues card and present it to the Credentials Committee on arrival. The Communication activities actually begin on Sunday, November 12th. All activities will 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 MEETING EVENT SCHEDULE

#### Sunday, November 12

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

#### Monday, November 13

- 9:00 a.m. Comm. on Work Exemplification of the Alabama Masonic Degree Rituals  
\*Secretary Meeting to follow
- 7:00 p.m. Grand Lodge Banquet

#### Tuesday, November 14

- 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 15

- 8:00 a.m. • From Refreshment to Labor
- Third Session Business
- Election of Officers
- Installation of Officers
- Closing of the 2017 Grand Lodge Annual Communication

## ANNUAL CAVE DEGREE CELEBRATION

On Friday, August 18, 2017, Bolivar Lodge #127, Stevenson, traveled to Union Lodge #38 in Kingston, TN to confer the Alabama Fellow Craft degree inside the lodge hall at the annual Cave Degree celebration in Kingston. Members from Bolivar Lodge #127, Bridgeport Lodge #543, North Sand Mountain Lodge #920 and Scottsboro Lodge #359 participated in the degree. In attendance that night, there were 230 brethren representing 115 lodges from 14 states and Brazil and Nova Scotia.

On Saturday, inside Elben Cave, a team from Georgia conferred the Georgia MM degree on their candidates. There were 285 in attendance at the cave.

The annual Cave Degree celebration has been ongoing since 1972. It is a two day event with the EA or FC degrees conferred at the lodge



Above: Group photo of participants in the Cave Degree

Left: Attendees pose on the path leading to Elben Cave

hall on Friday, and a MM degree conferred on Saturday inside the cave. The last time Alabama work was done there was 1974 when York Lodge #211 conferred the MM degree in the cave.

The state of Alabama was well represented with many Brethren and Lodges from our state in attendance.