

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! EMAIL SUBMISSIONS FOR THE SPRING ISSUE OF THE MASONIC MESSENGER BY MARCH 15TH.

If your Lodge has any events or news to share, contact the Grand Lodge or the Editor (jmsfineart@gmail.com) with details with details. Check out the Grand Lodge Facebook page for more news and events at www.facebook.com/GLoFAL. Get involved today! Submit to the Masonic Messenger and the Grand Lodge Facebook page!!

WIDOWS SONS GURLEY LODGE No 521



From Left: Bro. Harold Sexton, Bro. Crandon Creel, Bro. Steve Beems, and Bro. Greg Durr, PGM.

The "West Alabama Raised Riders" and the "Brothers in The Wind" chapters of the Widows Sons Masonic Riding Association came together to support Gurley Lodge #521. On August 23rd as the coals were heating up and the Boston Butts were beginning to be smoked, we knew without a doubt it was going to be a fun day. As the cooking was going on, the day of fellowship and harmony could not be beat. As the time clicked by and the smell started to permeate the air, this just kept getting better and better. We had a brother that is new to the area come by and will begin to attend lodge with us. The Widows Sons were able to help Gurley Lodge #521 with support, but the best part of it all is that several brothers purchased Boston Butts not just for themselves but to share with needy families within the community. Each one of those families was very appreciative and thankful.

SONORA LODGE No 635 50 YEAR PIN



District Lecturer Jim McGee and members of Sonora Lodge with Walter "Jesse" Hadley (center).

Members of Sonora Masonic Lodge #635 in Summerdale recently presented Walter "Jesse" Hadley with a gold pin and a framed certificate recognizing him for his faithful service to the Fraternity for over 50 years. The presentation was made at the Diversicare Nursing Home in Foley. Brother Hadley was very grateful for being recognized as a long-time Mason and cherished the many friendships he made over the years.

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 Lodge secretaries that are actively involved in using the database report that they really like it. On that note, we will have a secretaries' meeting on Monday afternoon following the Committee on Work session. I hope you all will be able to attend.

The Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge is coming up November 11-13, 2019 and will be held 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 10th. All activities take place in the Embassy Ballroom of the Embassy Suites Hotel.

An overview of the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge is as follows:

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Sunday, November 10

2:00 p.m. Committee on Work Practice of the Third Degree

5:00 p.m. Religious Worship Service

Monday, November 11

9:00 a.m. Comm. on Work Exemplification of the Alabama Masonic Degree Rituals

*Secretary Meeting to follow

6:30 p.m. Grand Lodge Banquet

Tuesday, November 12

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 13

8:00 a.m. From Refreshment to Labor

- Third Session Business

- Election of Officers

- Installation of Officers

- Closing of the 2019 Grand Lodge

Annual Communication

STATE CERTIFICATION

BY BRO. DREW BARNETT, DISTRICT LECTURER



Pictured Above: Brother Tony McCarty receiving certificates for the EA and FC degrees and Brother Will Crisler receiving the EA certificate. Brother Will is very close to getting his FC certificate also. Not pictured is Brother Tommy Waldrop who got the FC certificate

Lots of Brothers would like to obtain a state certification in the ritual work but find it to be a daunting challenge when they first start. It is a huge jump to go from being an instructor in the catechisms to getting the state certificate. Group 4, District 31 has started a program to help

Brethren obtain a state certification in the ritual by doing so in smaller steps. We have instituted a plan first proposed by the late Ron Thomas whereby a Brother would get a certificate for knowing all the parts, both floor work and verbiage, for each degree, with the exception of the EA and MM lectures.

The way this works is that a Brother would receive a certificate for learning each part, from Tiler to Master, in the Entered Apprentice degree, another for the Fellowcraft degree (including the staircase and "G" lectures), another for the first section of the Master Mason degree, and finally another for learning all the parts of the second section of the Master Mason degree. These can be learned in any order the Brother wants. After obtaining all of these, a Brother could learn the EA and MM lectures and would have a much smaller step to obtain the state certificate.

We have just started this in District 31 and have already presented two EA certificates and two FC certificates.

A MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER

BY VAN TIDWELL, MW GRAND MASTER

Brethren, the one thing that best describes my experience as Grand Master and as a Grand Lodge Officer is; "Blink and it is gone". It seems just yesterday, that I was installed as Grand Master. I still remember looking around the room seeing loved ones, members of my home lodge, Masons and their families. Everyone's support was felt on that day and continued for this Grand Master throughout my entire term.

Allowing me to be Grand Master has given me opportunities to meet many Brethren and their families within and outside the State of Alabama. Friends that I have developed through this experience is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life. The one thing that has made an impression on me is the passion, commitment and love each Master Mason that I come in contact with, thinks of our Great Fraternity. The love everyone has given to my family and myself is indescribable and I am eternally grateful to all.

As Grand Master I faced many challenges that I hope to have made proper, responsible and helpful decisions on during my term. I truly do love Masonry in Alabama and hope that I served this office with the dignity and honor that it deserves. I did not get to visit every lodge nor attend every function that was scheduled, but warm hospitality, friendship and brotherly love was extended to me each day of the year during my travels and visits. I do believe that this experience has made me a better man and a better Mason.

Now that my term as Grand Master is coming to an end, I look forward to continuing to serving this Great Fraternity and its new officers in the coming years. Masonry has given so much more to me than I can ever repay. Know one thing about Masonry in Alabama, it is strong today and with the leadership that is in place, will continue to be strong tomorrow. There is so much each

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND IN YOUR PHOTOS, NEWS AND EVENTS TO PUBLISH IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER! DEADLINE IS MARCH 15TH



To stay up to date on Grand Lodge and District news, please send changes of address and membership status to your Lodge Secretary and become an E-Mailson, just visit: www.alafreeMasonry.org/EMasons

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

MILLBROOK, AL 36054

P.O. Box 1070

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

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.

KILLEN LODGE № 788 HONORS 50, 60 & 70 YEAR MASONS



Pictured: The 50, 60 and 70 year Masons who were attended the Awards Day held by Killen Lodge #788

On August 11th, Killen Lodge #788 held an awards day to honor a group of 50, 60 and 70 year masons, some that had not been able to attend in some time. Some traveled from as little as 15 minutes away others as much as 4 hours to be there. We saw old friendships reignited, our lodge was filled to capacity with friends and family; It was a great day of fellowship and great to hear the stories these brothers had to tell.

We were honored to have in attendance our 70 year masons - Brothers Alvin Burbank and

Henry Hood, our 60 year masons - Horace Gray, Morris Thomas, and William Peden (who has since passed to the celestial lodge above) and finally our 50 year masons - James Cole, John Avery, Edward Myrick And Joe Scott. Awards and pins were presented by MWGM Van Tidwell and our District Lecturer Bro Mark Waddell.

Remember, the histories of your lodges and the history of Masonry are contained within the hearts and minds of Brothers such as these so take the time to listen to them, remember and retell their stories.

METCALF LODGE AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP TO SLOCOMB GRAD



An outstanding student, Chase Reeder, of Slocomb High School, was awarded a \$1,000 Scholarship Grant from the Grand Lodge of Alabama and Metcalf Masonic Lodge of Slocomb. The grant was presented to Mr. Reeder at his graduation ceremony. He was selected for the award based on his academic achievements and student citizenship.

From Left: Mr. Bill Hanson, Secretary of Metcalf Lodge, Chase Reeder, and M. C. 'Bud' Himes a senior member of the Lodge.

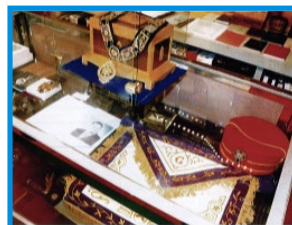
THE ACCIDENTAL MASONIC MUSEUM

BY MACARTHUR DAVIS LOCAL № 779, BLACKSHEAR № 593

Greetings from The Accidental Masonic Museum! I would like to begin with a brief history of how our little museum came to be. After my retirement in 2001, my wife Nancy and I purchased a two-room house, and had it relocated adjacent to our home with the intention of filling it with mementos and certificates from my 34 year career in law enforcement along with other items from many unforgettable family events. We soon learned that my personal collection of many Masonic affiliations, such as pins, rings, hats, and other items began to fill the entire house. As other Brothers and Sisters heard about my little project, they began to donate their own



Items on display at the museum



Masonic collections to be put on display so they would be remembered.

It was through this experience, that I discovered that numerous items, articles, symbols, and antiques were being left in old family homes and lodges. Items once loved by family in our older years were now being lost to time. From there, the little two-room house became a 3, 4, 5 room Accidental Museum with walls covered and display cases filled with Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite, York Rite, OES, Amaranth, Shriner, Tall Cedars, Grotto, and numerous other items with Masonic history.

To conclude, I would like to share with you that this is not a money raising endeavor, I do not

AMAZONSMILE

BY TEDDY GROGAN, PGM

A while back a Brother contacted us and told us he was using the AmazonSmile website to do his shopping and had entered the Alabama Masonic Home as his selected non-profit.

How it works: we register with Amazon as a non-profit, and then people can shop through the AmazonSmile program as opposed to using the normal Amazon website. All the pricing and deals are the same as the normal Amazon, the only difference is that a portion of the sales will be donated from Amazon to our non-profit.

Currently, \$30.24 is pending for us to receive after we complete the registration process. If everyone uses AmazonSmile and selects the Alabama Masonic Home as their designated non-profit, we could see a huge boost to our Charitable Endowment at no extra cost.

All you have to do is sign into your Amazon account and do the following: Click on 'Account & Lists.' Under 'Your Lists' click 'AmazonSmile Charity Lists.' Under 'Or pick your own charitable donation,' click 'Search' and type in 'Alabama Masonic Home, Millbrook, AL.' Click on it. When you go back to do some shopping you will follow the same path as above, and when you get to the AmazonSmile Charity List, all you will need to do is click it. You can also type in 'smile.amazon.com' and sign in to your Amazon account there. Please encourage your family to use this also.

What do you guys think? This would be a no cost process for us, and if people choose to use it, we get free money via direct deposit from Amazon's non-profit charity system.

ask for funds. All items will be returned to their rightful owners upon request.

I would like to invite anyone who is interested to please come and visit us. Just call me at (251) 538-1009, or Nancy at (251) 727-0575. The address is 4291 Grissett Bridge Rd, Brewton, Alabama. Directions from I-65: Take Exit No. 69, go north about one mile, turn left and drive four miles. Turn left on left gravel drive and go about two hundred yards.

GRAND MASTER CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

of us need to continue to do to make Masonry flourish within our lodges and communities, but before it can happen, it must be in your heart. May God bless each and every one of you and be proud to be a part of the most Elite, Greatest and Nobelist organization known to Man.

BICENTENNIAL MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The Grand Lodge has entered into an agreement with Publishing Concepts LP (PCI) to publish a Bicentennial Edition Membership Directory. It will contain an introductory section with the historical record of our Grand Lodge since its beginning in 1821. There will be a member-submitted photo gallery with an opportunity to include a 300-word essay about your Masonic experience. In the biographical section, members will be listed alphabetically with the following information provided by you: current name; primary lodge name and number; codes for highest masonic honor received, highest masonic office held and Masonic affiliations (up to 4); current job title; residence address and phone number; first names of spouse and children; and one preferred email address. You will be contacted shortly after our Grand Lodge session in November by PCI to update your information and request your participation to submit photos and/or personal messages to be included. PCI will also give you an opportunity to purchase a directory if you so choose to do so. There is no obligation to purchase to be included.

Brethren, on Facebook, I often see some of our members asking for a recommendation for a plumber, electrician, lawyer, etc. I know that I would rather have another Mason helping me than someone who is not. With that in mind, please read the following release from Grand View, our database provider:

We're excited to announce the launch of our business directory service! This project has been a long time coming and we've been running it through the paces to see that we have a solution that will work with the least amount of overhead on the Grand Lodge offices.

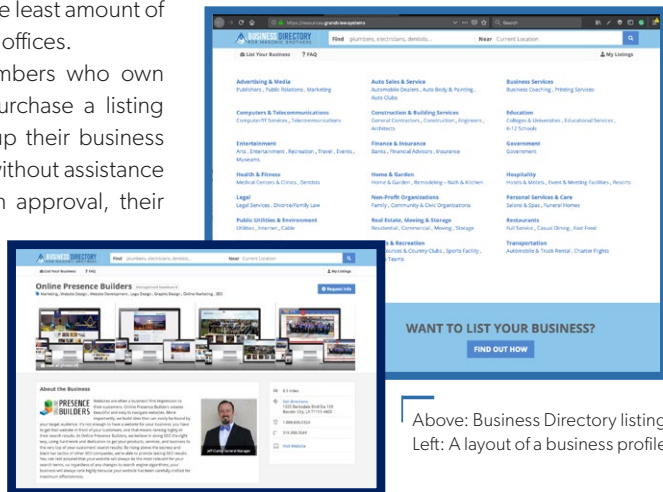
Here's how it works: Members who own or operate a business can purchase a listing for \$120/Year. They can set up their business through their member portal without assistance from the Grand Lodge. Upon approval, their business is instantly available in the directory.

Members can search for listings through their member portal and find businesses in their home jurisdiction as well as any other jurisdiction using the directory. This provides a value-added service for

each and every member while encouraging communication and interaction with their brothers. If a member falls out of good standing, they lose access to their member portal and the business directory.

This program also has the potential to generate income for the Grand Lodge!

Brethren, everyone will have access to the Business Directory by simply using your member number to register in the database. Your Lodge secretary will be able to assist you.



Above: Business Directory listing
Left: A layout of a business profile

LOST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

for the legitimacy of the Lost Word is overwhelming in modern Freemasonry. The real question however is this; despite the mountain of evidence that the Lost Word is real, are modern Masons truly searching for the correct Lost Word? A more thought provoking query would be this perhaps; What if there was actually no long drawn out search that is needed? What if the Lost Word is actually right in front of us "Hiding in Plain Sight" as it were?

The ideology that the modern Mason is on a spiritual journey is in fact a very apt interpretation for what the modern Mason should be doing. The Mason should be forever engaged in learning, exploring and asking question; or as we like to say "Seeking More Light". This pursuit of knowledge is critical for the Mason and the Symbolic Lodge has the obligation to feed its members hunger for this knowledge and growth. This is given in the charge during the Entered Apprentice degree, restated in the Fellowcraft degree and reaffirmed in the Master Mason degree. Ask any Mason what the Craft means to him and you will get a limitless supply of different answers, but is that really true? It is the author's position that no matter the verbiage, the answers are all basically the same. All Masons are seeking enlightenment that transcends the

normal exoteric systems and takes the Mason's heart to a truly spiritual perspective.

Is it really just a Word?

The short answer is No. The long answer is Yes. Now that you are thoroughly confused let me offer even less clear scripture to solidify the confusion. Psalm 82:6 states "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." If we look at this scripture at face value, one might not immediately correlate this passage as relevant to the Lost Word, however as it is explained in Dan Brown's book, this quite possibly might be the very core of the Craft as we know it. Let me explain the logic, Freemasonry teaches that King Solomon received the temple design DIRECTLY from God. This in turn by Jewish laws of the day would make Solomon by default a prophet, but he was never referred to as a prophet. This would also have been considered heresy by the High Priests, as only they were anointed to communicate directly with God. So how can someone who is not a prophet nor a high priest communicate directly with God? It is possible because of the above referenced scripture.

How is this answer the question of the Lost Word, it is in fact as Dan Brown put it in his book, quite simple. The Lost Word, is not simple just a

single word, it is The Word of God or in Masonic language it is the Sacred Volume that is on our altars. We even acknowledge this to be true during our bible presentations for newly raised Master Masons in which we refer to the Bible as the Trestle board of Life, or the most complete set of plans ever given to mankind.

What does this mean for us as Masons?

Imagine what our society and even our world would look like if what we considered Masonic behaviors and lessons transcended into normal society. Imagine what impact the Craft would have on our communities, families, jobs and even our circle of friends if we as Masons realized that this Lost Word we are in constant search for was right in front of us the entire time. Suppose for a moment what would happen if masonic behavior and civility became basic human behavior and civility. We as Masons have a responsibility to adhere to and honor the four cardinal virtues that are taught to us as Entered Apprentices, and as such they are to be honored, adhered to and displayed with unwavering vigor in and out of our lodges.

Imagine a world where the Craft wasn't really needed, so I will leave you brethren with this one question; Is the word really lost, or is it just lost in all the words?

DIGGING UP BONES

BY JOHN STRICKLING, PGM

When thinking of a title to this Article I thought of the Randy Travis song "Digging up Bones," because by simply changing one line of he text to read "Digging up things some folks would like to be left alone," we can recall the objections to the substance of the following topic when it was brought up in the past. It is time to revisit!

The current membership numbers for the Grand Lodge of Alabama now stands at 20,500 plus or minus. From 1985 through January 1, 2019 Twelve Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy (12,770) men had taken the First Degree of Masonry in Alabama and advanced no further; an additional One Thousand One Hundred and Thirty-Four (1,134) had taken the Second Degree and advanced no further; for a total in that time frame of Thirteen Thousand Nine Hundred and Four (13,904). A failure rate of approximately Forty-Eight Percent (48%).

There are those under the misconception that the Masonic Fraternity of today has not changed since its inception. Nothing can be further from the truth. From the time the first Lodges were chartered in this country in Boston and Savannah; they would appear completely different when compared with today's rituals. Freemasonry has evolved to the point that each Grand Lodge jurisdiction has its own adoptions and the rituals vary from each other. We all eventually arrive at the same point, but it sometimes is certainly not by the same route.

The Grand Lodge of Alabama is no exception. When reading past proceedings, old ritual monitors and viewing the adoptions of today as compared to the 1800's our adoptions and methods have undergone radical change. Prior to 1836 all three degrees could be conferred in one day in Alabama and after that date until the 1870's you were limited to two (2) degrees in one day. The catechism/lessons?

We are well past the time when we should have addressed the way we require our new Masons to learn the catechism/lessons. This is not 1950! There are very few "stay at home Mothers," Dad may work multiple jobs, little Joey and Judy have to be taken to soccer, baseball, dance class, or any number of activities that they are involved in and of course, Mother and Father are expected to be there! Leisure time for everyone is at a premium. Church membership is falling nationwide, and most civic organizations are suffering the same fate as Masonry.

Time is a precious gift and we must try and accommodate those who enter our door "in search of Light," to make their journey enjoyable, but, yet attainable. When we accept a Man's money and petition; vote him into our

midst and initiate him; we have a duty and obligation to do everything in our power to see that he completes his Masonic journey.

I have had students who after several sessions could not learn the lessons by our traditional methods. An EA at my Lodge who was an Engineer by profession was impossible to teach by mouth to ear; after three sessions he couldn't remember the first sentence, but said he learned by reading, by seeing the text; he never advanced. My very best childhood friend had extreme difficulties in taking a written test but could score well on an oral test. God made each of us with different gifts and abilities and everyone does not learn by the same method. Added to this is the fact that all teachers are not created equal. As Secretary of my Lodge I have removed almost 30 EA's in the past two years to the "failure to advance" file. Having only two to three active members willing to teach and that is on their schedule. When you add the number of outstanding EA's we have and their various work schedules and commitments you find that your Lodge has a serious problem with the current system.

It is time for us to put our Catechism/Lessons in a code or cypher format to enable the Initiate to have a study guide to have with him, enable him to learn at his pace and at the time he has available to himself. A Mentor would be assigned to teach him the cypher and be available for questions and guidance. The Third-Degree lesson should also be a requirement, but with a cypher/code book it would not create an undo burden and would give all future Brothers the knowledge about the Craft that all should have learned who are now Master Masons.

THE LOST WORD

BY WILLIAM M. HARPER JR.
ROBERTSDALE LODGE № 821

What is the Lost Word and is It Real?

Mainstream author Dan Brown published a book in 2009 entitled The Lost Symbol, in which the ever dynamic and seemingly limitless history professor Robert Langdon is entrusted with one of Freemasonry's greatest treasures. The novel; while extremely well written, entertaining and most importantly; did shed some much needed positive light on the Order. The novel did raise a quite age old and often misunderstood question in the fraternity; This being of course what is the true "Lost Word" of Freemasonry.

Each Brother is taught in the Master Mason degree about the ideology of the Lost Word and its origins in antiquity, however the modern Mason is only given what could be described as a superficial synopsis of what the Lost Word

There are those who are reading this that are shaking their heads and thinking that "this is not right", "this is not the way I learned this", that we are giving away our "secrets" by doing a cypher/code book. First, I would ask you to look at the numbers above once again; 20,500 Masons today compared with 26,000 just five years ago and 76,000 in 1960. 13,904 who never became Master Masons! Is change so distasteful that you wish to see the Fraternity go extinct? Second, I would ask that you go to your computer and look up any or all of the following websites: studyblue.com, Duncan's Masonic Ritual, sacred-texts.com, evangelicaltruth.com, freezingblue.com, or www.ephesians.org-masonic. After visiting these sites please ask yourself "just how many secrets do we have"?

While serving as Grand Master, many of you may remember the Group Meetings that were conducted in the Spring and Fall of 2015. A few items that the Power Point presentation addressed at that time were membership numbers past and present, membership projections and the issues with the "Failure to Advance" candidates. The projections of membership decline have been fairly accurate and the Failure to Advance numbers continue to mount. I am not a Prophet Brethren; all that is required is to look at the numbers of where we have been and where we are headed. In 2015 the Grand Lodge assembled decided to do nothing to address these issues. Nothing has been done or proposed since.

It has been written "that to do the same thing over and over and expect a different outcome" is the true definition of insanity. Welcome to the Fraternity!

really is or what it could mean. An additional evaluation of the subject has lead the author to attempt to identify the following inquisitions:

1. Is the Lost Word really real?
2. If the Lost Word is real, is it really just a word?

Yes Its Real

A Mason can refer to any Masonic monitor, publication, spoken lesson, ritual, reference material or any of the thousands upon thousands volumes of documents available to Masons and the reference to the Lost Word is the most central legend in all of Masonic lore. We see it outlined at ever Master Mason ritual, we see it taught during the Master Mason lesson, we also see it as the object one is pursuing in the 29 degrees that are taught in the Scottish Rite. The evidence

SEE 'LOST' ON PAGE 6

BY JAMES MASON

THE HOLY BIBLE

McCARTY-FARRAH № 8

The Rule and Guide of Masonic Faith is the Holy Bible. From the cradle to the grave, we cling to this book for the source of knowledge and inspiration and promise of eternal life through the promise from Jesus Christ our Savior for salvation. He came to Earth a man in the form of the "Father, Son and the Holy Ghost."

Freemasonry lays on its altar of Faith in this book. We teach that it is prayer that counts, not the place of prayer. On this book, we have all taken our obligations. On our altars, this book lies open when lodge is open. No where can a lodge be held without it.

The Bible is given to man, but Freemasons take it as the special book of Revised Religion. This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiest of Believers. Its doctrines are Holy, its precepts are binding, and its histories are true. The Messiah is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It

is the Traveler's Map, the Pilgrim's staff, the Pilot's compass, the Mason's Light, and the Christian's Charter. Through it Heaven is opened, paradise restored, and the gates of Hell disclosed.

The Bible is also a piece of furniture in Lodges. We may worship the God we know by any name we wish, yet find in this Book of Books the story of wishes, His mercy, and His Goodness. If we are troubled here, we will find ease. If grief strikes your home, you will find comfort. Much of our rituals are based upon this book, and all of our truths are taken from it. Many Lodges upon completion of the third degree in Masonry presents the newly made Master Mason with a copy of the Holy Bible with the hope that he will use it, read it, learn it, and love it. Thus, making himself a better living stone for that Spiritual Temple not made with hands.

And so, may the Great Architect bless you and cause His peace to come to you through the pages of this, His book, "The Holy Bible."

TIME, PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

BY MARTY PUCKETT, WM, GERALDINE № 838

I was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason in October of 1980; almost 40 years ago. When I began in the fraternity, I set out to make my mark in the Masonic order. I was young and headstrong and full of myself. I wanted my name on those certificates on the wall of all the lodges that I visited. Within a couple of years, my lesson proficiency and Grand Lodge certificates were proudly secured to the East wall of the lodge. I visited dozens of lodges and attended conferences during that memorable time. I gave lectures, taught lessons and was fully involved with being a happy and productive mason.

Then Life stepped in, as it usually does, and threw some curve balls my way. I joined the National Guard, and then moved to the Atlanta area and began chasing that all mighty dollar. I became so engrossed with career, travelling, the title on the door and plaques on the wall, that I laid Masonry aside for over 25 years. I always

carried in my heart my love of Masonry, and the memories of the brothers and friends I made.

I moved back to Alabama 12 years ago, but I procrastinated about returning to the lodge. No reason, just lazy and maybe a little unsure how I would be received, after being gone so long. Then, a couple of years ago, I turned in my application for reinstatement, and thankfully was accepted. I was excited and apprehensive all at the same time. I had nothing to fear, the brothers accepted me with open arms.

In the short span of 2 years, I have been re-learning the work (with the aid of some very patient Master Masons) and visiting lodges and attending conferences. I have been elected as Master of the lodge and appointed the newest District Lecturer for Group 1 District 11.

Which brings me back to the title of this story: Time, Patience, and Perseverance (will accomplish all things). It's true. I am living it.

GUARD THE DOORS

The basic purpose of masonry is defined as an effort to make "better men from candidates of good men." Additionally, most Masonic references state that there is an emphasis placed on the individual man strengthening his character, improving his moral and spiritual outlook, and broadening his horizons.

We commonly like to focus on the many positive actions of our brothers and all the outstanding charitable works our lodges perform. If, in the non-Masonic world, we are thought of as good men, it is important that we

continue to recognize and improve upon the good we do. We must however, occasionally recognize and discuss the negative aspects of our fraternity so that we can take action to correct and improve our fraternity as required, especially if we wish to be thought of as good men in future generations. Many of our members realize Masonry is declining in membership and therefore believe our importance to our local communities is also shrinking.

By looking at the Grand Lodge annual report, it shows that we black ball only about 1% of the

PRIDE OF MASONRY

BY RICKY KILGORE, PGC

Today the world sees us as men who make up the ideals of Masons as just another bunch of old men who meet, eat, and do whatever we do behind closed doors. The reason quality men do not come to us to be a part of what we offer is because they see no Pride in us.

This Pride I speak of today is the type where we dress with honor to the Lodge and the Fraternity. The world wears flip-flop shoes and knee britches and so do the Masons in most lodges. So where is the Pride? Someone said that if we dress with Pride in our garments for a Lodge meeting that we would run a lot of brothers off. That has been accomplished; our numbers drop every year.

We speak of getting our numbers back up. How do we do this? Well, one thing is letting the world see the Pride beam from us because we are Masons. So, how do we bring about this Pride? Let us start with our Language for one thing. We have too many brothers who use God's name in vain, and the language Masons use on social media like Facebook or Twitter is abominable. We have all the emblems and speak of our Masonic ideals, but the "F" bomb is just another word and cursing is nothing but a simple drop in the hat to Masons.

If the investigating committees would do their jobs properly, then we would have some Pride back in the brotherhood. When a brother is raised, we speak of the quality he should use, but we do not use it ourselves.

When we become real Masons with respect in our lives, and when we show the world the true meaning of being a Mason, then they will want what we have and yes, the numbers will rise. The issue with these numbers will be quality men versus foul mouth-no respect of persons type of men. Please give this a thought and you decide if you just want to laugh or really be a Mason, learning the craft work and ritual and truly having Pride in your Lodge.

God Bless Masonry, God Bless Alabama, and God Bless America.

men who apply. In the past, as recent as the 1950s, we rejected as many as 35-40% of those who applied. Do our actions today mean that we are only accepting petitions from men we already know that will pass our committee's investigations or does it mean that we are not adequately investigating the men who apply? Or do we simply vote for anyone who wants to join? How many petitions may have been approved by your lodge by a recommender or a voucher who have never met or even seen the petitioner?

SEE 'DOORS' ON PAGE 5

BY MIKE TAYLOR, DGM, DOLCITO № 596

BROTHERS IN ARMS

It is always an honor and privilege to Raise a new Brother Master Mason and welcome him into our Fraternity. Often, these Brethren are Veterans of our Armed Forces and I am always proud to present them with the Alabama Veterans Pin as a small token of our personal gratitude and collective esteem. There is a tremendous spirit of brotherhood among those who have served in the military. Even if they have not served in the same branch or even on the same continent, veterans immediately have a common bond that unites them by virtue of their military experiences. This is also prevalent in our Masonic Fraternity. When one Mason meets another, they are immediately united in the spirit of Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love. This often occurs among Brethren who may have never met each other until that moment. I believe that is one of the greatest aspects of our Brotherhood – the spirit of Unity which exists among Masons based on shared experiences, commitments, and beliefs. As we were taught in our Entered Apprentice degree, Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance. This is doubly true when Masons who have served in our Nation's military meet. The camaraderie of those who have served in the military, often characterized as the "Band of Brothers", is made intensely stronger when coupled with the bond established by Masonic Fellowship and Amity.

A few of these Brethren are still actively serving in the United States Military. On August 22nd, 2019, I was honored to Raise Brother Christopher Todd Hall in Ware Masonic Lodge #435 in Alexander City, Alabama. Brother Hall is currently serving as in the United States Air Force and is living in Alexander City. He is a Chief Master Sergeant (E-9) and is entering his 30th year in the United States Air Force - 10 years on Active Duty and the last 20 years as an IMA Reservist. The IMA program is the "Individual Mobilization Augmentee" program where a member of the USAF Reserve is not assigned to a specific unit but instead serves as an individual working for an Active Duty headquarters or operational command. The majority of Brother Hall's IMA service has been assigned to the 42nd Security Forces Squadron at Maxwell Air Force Base. In 2016, he was promoted and reassigned to the European Command Headquarters (HQ EUCOM) in Stuttgart, Germany where he works in the Operations and Anti-Terrorism Division. He has deployed to Jordan and Afghanistan in support of USAF operational missions.

I share Brother Hall's background with you to highlight the caliber of men who join our great Fraternity. Several of the Founding Fathers of the American Masonic Fraternity served in the Continental Army. We all know Brother George Washington's military achievements but the majority of his officers were Masons as well. Throughout our Nation's History, men who have answered the call to serve have been proud Masons. Great leaders such as Gen.

John "Black Jack" Pershing and Gen. Douglas MacArthur, as well as thousands of men serving

in all ranks and services, have been proud Masons; once they completed their military service, they returned to their communities and lodges and continued to make a positive impact. Brother Hall joins that long line of Masonic Brothers who served and are now serving both our Nation and Fraternity.

To all of our Brethren here in Alabama who have served in the United States Armed Forces, offer a most sincere Thank You for your service. It is because of men like you that our Great Country continues to be the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.



From Left: RWDGM Mike Taylor, Bro. Todd Hall and his Father, Bro. Wayne Hall of Taylor Lodge #23, Salem, VA.

DOORS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

On closer examination, when we initiate these men "who want to join us," as many as 50-60% never complete their EA lessons to be passed to the next degree. Looking back into our past again, it shows that almost all the men we accepted completed their lessons and were ultimately raised. Either we did not hold them to tight memorization standards or we did a better job of interviewing and selecting them.

These two issues should cause us to ask: Are we adequately investigating the men who apply and are we accepting too many men who are not willing or are not able to learn their lessons?

Another point for concern in our lodges is the number of brothers caught stealing or found to be criminals. In the past several years a number of lodge secretaries have been discovered stealing from their lodges. It is easy for them to steal because all incoming funds go through them, so much of the money collected is cash and there is little practice of checking the secretaries' activities and records. Further still, we find passed brothers who have been arrested, convicted and placed on criminal offender lists before they were initiated. While no man should necessarily be punished by their lodges until they have been found guilty, we should be aware of their character as we are supposed to be a group of good men.

Some of the historically traditional activities in our past that have changed in modern times have hurt us. One of the traditions of the past which was dropped by our society is the way we dress for formal affairs. Go to almost any church today and find men routinely dressed in casual everyday clothing. In the past, masonry was considered a formal activity and men dressed as they would have for church or at a funeral. Today, some lodges have amazingly changed

their bylaws to prohibit members from wearing shorts.

What happens when a lodge is forced to raise their dues because of the cost of staying open? Frequently, they lose a significant number of members who say they "cannot pay the additional dues." Increasing dues from \$50 per year to \$100 per year means a member would have to sacrifice 14 cents per day to pay the additional amount. If a brother cannot manage his household budget and cannot pay dues to maintain his lodge faculties, how is he going to contribute to the needs of a brother or a brother's family?

Continuing the discussion of financial issues, what about lodges that have nothing in their bank accounts. Many of our lodges have no financial reserves. Lodges have been known to sell their lodge real estate because they have no money to maintain their facilities.

As we frantically require EAs and FCs to learn and turn in their lessons without error, we are rapidly running out of members who can teach and perform lesson sessions. We are additionally running out of officers who know their parts for lodge meetings and degrees. The way we are going we will not be able to perform funeral services as no young Masons are learning this work, Masonic degrees or even open and close our lodges in a few years.

Finally, lodges have many brothers who have not come to meetings in years. How many members, if they walked into our next meeting, might not be recognized by anyone present? We swear to take care of brothers and their families; how can we perform that function if we don't know who they are?

What does all the above say about us? What does all this say about our Masonic leadership?

