

The Master's Message

I am now halfway through my tenure as Master of your Lodge and I must confess that the expectations have been nowhere near the experience, and that the labor has certainly been greater than the refreshment. This old ashlar required more hewing than could have been imagined but, through the chisel of experience and the hammer of education, I have found myself here today a better man, but deeply aware of the work that always remains to be done.

Before I continue my message, I must first thank my officers and those dedicated brothers whose weekly and daily contributions of time and ideas have been a steady source of pride and accomplishment. We have raised X candidates in the last year and at each stated meeting we continue to enjoy distinguished guests from around the state, Masonic and otherwise. Your Lodge and the accomplishments of the past six months are, without question, a source of pride for all Texas Masons.

Brothers, how many of you have not yet been to visit your new lodge? And, of you that have not been by to see this stupendous edifice, I wonder how many of you wear a Masonic ring or have in your daily peripheral some Masonic symbol? Do you enjoy the benefit of that symbol without the slightest remorse of participating in its origin – your own Lodge? Do you honestly believe that you are now a perfect ashlar and further hewing unnecessary? I did.

Come to your lodge, just once again. Do not forget that a Masonic Lodge has always been and remains a place where the highest nobleman could be found in discourse with the lowest peasants. Our own Lodge sees judges talking to mechanics, stock brokers with bank tellers and doctors with students. To the outside these may seem like enormous gaps of impossibly relatable association, but in Gray Lodge these gaps disappear.

So Brother, the next time you take a look at the Masonic ring you wear, the lapel pin on your dresser or the dues card in your wallet, take a deeper moment of reflection than usual. Contemplate the silent and lingering persistence of the obligation you took at some time. You are, as I have discovered, like me, far from being a perfect ashlar. Come to your Lodge and take some more the rough edges off.

Fraternally,
Bill Ehmling
Worshipful Master

“Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty.”
~John Selden

Of Note

Thank you to Sherri Nanny for her presentation at Stated Meeting, November 2nd, 2006 about Eastern Star. It was eloquent, thoughtful and compelling. And, thank you S. Meirshedt for the bequeathing of the Brother Meirshedts Past Masters jewel. A beautiful and appreciated gesture.

Thanks to the soon-to-be Eagle scouts were who worked on the tree planting, staking, and irrigation installation eagle Scout project in October. These scouts were responsible for the beautiful cedar drive onto the Lodge grounds. The Scouts are; Scott Schroeder, Kyle Daroca, Sam Kusin and Michael Davenport. Special appreciation is deserved by Dr. Russell Williams; Dr. Jeff Allen, Mr. David Davenport Mrs. Charlotte Schroeder and Art Schroeder. These young men lack only their “parenting” merit badge to become full fledged Eagles.

Thank you to T.J. Ramey, of the Grand Lodge Masonic Education and Service Committee, for his visit at November's stated meeting.

Our Brother Ben

“Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man.” ~ Brother Benjamin Franklin

The Houston Museum of Natural Science is currently hosting an large exhibition on Brother Ben Franklin through January. This year is his 300th birthday. In celebration of Brother Ben's Masonic contributions, The Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation is hosting “A Night Out With Brother Ben” event on Friday, January 12th at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. The cost is X\$ per couple for hors de vours, tour and short presentation about our Brother Ben. 6:00 p.m. service and 7:00 presentation and tour. A Masonic Heritage Project brought to you by the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation.

“The US Constitution doesn't guarantee happiness, only the pursuit of it. You have to catch up with it yourself.” ~ Ben Franklin

The Third-Degree

Have you ever gotten the “third degree” from your wife, your boss, a police officer or maybe even your dog? Interestingly, even the most Masonically informed people have little idea what this phrase means when they say it. The “third degree” is a term that comes from Freemasonry and refers to a candidate that has received the degree of master mason, the third or highest degree upon passing an intensive test. Dating from the 1770s, and certainly by the 1800s, this term of Masonic origin was transferred to other kinds of interrogations. By 1890 the term became used for any long an arduous questioning or interrogation. This ordeal became fixed in the public mind as “getting the third degree”. Around the turn of the century the term began to be applied outside of Masonic rituals, but exclusively to police interrogations. The idea of a cruel interrogation being called the “third degree” was no doubt helped along by association with third-degree burn.

Our present Third Degree is not architectural, but traditionary, historical, and legendary; its traditions being unfortunately hyperbolic; its history apocryphal, and its legends fabulous. In the third degree of the pre-1890s, the degree conductor or some other brother would draw the back of a sword across candidate's naked stomach. If the initiation took place in the winter, the sword was left in a cold place and, when drawn across candidate's belly, it had a very shocking effect, causing the candidate to jump or tremble. -- *The Freemason's Treasury*, p. 222

Magnificent Texas Mason Moment

Texas was only an independent nation for nine years before she became the 28th state in the Union. This annexation of Texas then led to the war between Mexico and the US. The Mexican army was led by Santa Anna. James Polk was president at the time and his policies were largely to blame for the provocations between the countries. Polk propelled the notion of “manifest destiny”. The army that captured Mexico City was led by General Winfield Scott. Meanwhile in Mexico, over a period of twenty-five years Santa Anna had overthrown his own chief, Iturbide, installed a president Vincent Guerrero, then betrayed the Guerrero in partnership with Anastasio Bustamonte and then executed Guerrero, then replaced him with Bustamonte, then overthrew this Bustamonte, then defeated and killed Travis at the Alamo, and was then taken prisoner by Sam Houston at San Jacinto. General Santa Anna lost a war and lost a good part of Mexico to President Polk and General Scott. Santa Anna, Iturbide, Guerrero, Bustamonte, Travis, Houston, Polk and Scott were all Freemasons. (from Denslow, W.R., *10,000 Famous Freemasons*, 1957- 60)

Useless Facts:

- The QE2 burns one gallon of diesel fuel for every six inches it moves.
- The original game of "Monopoly" was circular.
- It costs more to buy a new car today in the United States than it cost Christopher Columbus to equip and undertake three voyages to and from the New World.
- A snail can sleep for 3 years. A Mason never rests.

Upcoming Events:

School of Instruction Thursday X, 2006 Info: Darin Pitts

Order of the Eastern Star Stated Meeting Tuesday December _____ Info:

December 3rd - Stated Meeting Grand Lodge of Texas, Waco Texas Info Lloyd Phelps,
www.gltexas.org

December X, Saturday work party 7:00 am – Noon. Info: Lex Lexleckie

January 2nd, 2007 Stated Meeting Info www.graylodge.org

January 12th, 2007 Houston Museum of Natural History, Night Out With Brother Ben: Info Lisa Slinkard

February 3rd, 2007 2nd Annual Library & Museum Auction Info: Paul Anderson
www.houstonmasoniclibrary.org .

April 17th, 2007 Time Capsule Burial Info: Doug Hissong

Visit Gray Lodge 329 at www.gray329.org.

Other Business