

# THE WADSWORTH SIDELINER

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*Wadsworth Lodge No. 417, F. & A.M.*

*A.M.*

INSTITUTED 1856

67 Corning Place, Albany, NY 12207-1999  
Stated Communications 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m.

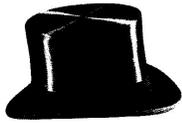
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**December 2007**

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## **UNDER THE MASTERS HAT**

Can you believe that it's already December and the holiday season and the ski season are in full swing? Mother Nature has cooperated this year with temperatures that are cold enough to accommodate the snow makers. The mountains are ready with the deepest early-season base in years. If there is anyone out there who likes to ski, please give me a call. I am sure we can find a mutually convenient time to enjoy the beneficial relaxation of fraternal friendship and harmless amusement on the slopes.

Thank you all for the continuing support you have shown me and Wadsworth Lodge during the first several months of this Masonic season. Our Lodge attendance has been acceptable and we have had successful programs (Rededication Night, Brother Bring a Friend Night and the Past Masters First Degree Night) in addition to our degree work. However, hold onto your seats because our year is going to get better. We anticipate having a record-breaking class of new petitioners this spring. Starting in January, the excitement will be high as the Wadsworth Lodge Membership juggernaut starts to roll. We are going to have another stellar year!

The sincere thanks of the Lodge and the whole Masonic Community go out to the Brothers who have participated in the Salvation Army Bell Ringing Program. The few hours a week we donate saves the Salvation Army money and helps them with their efforts to provide for the many thousands of people from our own communities who are less fortunate than us. I believe Wadsworth Lodge is one of the leading Lodges with respect to the number of days our Brothers have agreed to participate in this program. We should all be proud to be members of such a fine, community-spirited Lodge.

Please remember the true meaning of the holiday season by keeping those who are less fortunate than we in your prayers. It seems to me that every year the number of people in need of

help and assistance increases, and their needs become more acute. Charity is one of the hallmarks of our great fraternity and “[t]he opportunity for Brotherly Love presents itself every time we meet a member of the human family especially a Brother Mason.” Please do what you can for those who have less than you have been blessed with.

Sincerely and fraternally,  
John W. Scott

### **JANUARY 19, 2008 TABLE LODGE**

As you all know by now, we will have our third annual Table Lodge on January 19, 2008. The proceeds from this event will benefit the new Grand Lodge Benevolence Fund. The Table Lodge will have a Masonic history theme that will delve into the possible origins of our beloved Craft. Several Brothers will have parts in the drama and the scenery will once again be produced by our resident artist, Amy Nichol. I am optimistic that this will be an enjoyable and memorable evening, and I invite everyone to attend. Officers should plan to wear tuxedos, and the Brothers in attendance may wear business suits or other appropriate attire.

We still have openings in the cast, and we need assistance with table servers and cooks. If you are interested in helping, please contact John Scott at (518) 283-1168 or [scottydawg2000@aol.com](mailto:scottydawg2000@aol.com). Those who agree to assist as servers, cooks and actors may attend the event as guests of the Lodge.

For those of you who attended our second annual Table Lodge, you probably already know what to expect. However, for the uninitiated, the Table lodge is a ceremony that is in keeping with the ancient customs handed down to us from military lodges. It is a time when we, as Freemasons, rededicate ourselves to the noble and glorious purpose of bringing light to dispel darkness and to the service of Him in whom we put our trust. It is a time when we are summoned to give greater loyalty to our Lodge and our Fraternity. It is a time when we join together in the spirit of fellowship and brotherly love. The ceremony involves a formal seven course dinner with each course preceded by one of seven obligatory toasts. Every Brother will receive a custom designed “firing glass” to use for the toasts and to keep as a memento of the evening.

I hope this short description peaks your curiosity so that the event will be fully subscribed. **Please see the insert for further details about this Table Lodge and a reservation form.**

The Grand Lodge Benevolence is a fund that was established at the 2007 Grand Lodge Annual Communication to provide a perpetual fund to be used to assist distressed worthy Master Masons, their Widows and Orphans. The goal is to initially raise \$2,000,000.00 to fund this endeavor and the Grand Lodge Trustees have agreed to match all contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis during the year between the 2007 and 2008 Grand Lodge Communications.

If you cannot attend this Table Lodge, please consider making a donation of \$25.00 to Wadsworth Lodge #417. You can mail all contributions to John W. Scott at the address indicated on the Table Lodge insert. All Table Lodge contributions will be included in the total raised through this charitable event.

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Here is my Creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs it by his Providence. That he ought to be worshiped. That the most acceptable service we render him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this.

Benjamin Franklin

To the man who himself strives earnestly, God also lends a helping hand.

Aeschylus

## **2007 LODGE DUES**

Brethren, by the time you receive your December edition of The Wadsworth Sideliner you will have received the 2008 dues notice. Please remit your dues at your earliest opportunity. Remember that your dues are the life blood of our Lodge. When you send in your check, please up-date your address, phone number and internet address for our Secretary.

In the By-laws of Wadsworth Lodge revised November 2000, Article V, Section 1 states The Annual Lodge Dues shall be \$37.50 plus \$30.00 for Grand Lodge dues, payable in advance by the first Stated Communication in December of each year. Members reaching 75 years of age or 50 years of membership shall be granted Life Membership whereupon exemption is granted from Wadsworth Lodge dues, but the Brother is still obligated to pay Grand Lodge dues of \$30.00. If there is a hardship for which a brother is unable to pay his dues, Article VI, 1b states "Should reasonable cause be established because of poor health or financial problems the member may have his due remitted by vote of the Lodge." Please, brethren, let the Worshipful Master or Secretary know of your hardship instead of becoming unaffiliated for nonpayment of dues. Your lodge is required to pay the Grand Lodge dues as long as you are carried on books.

### **2008 Dues Exemption for Active Military Brothers**

In keeping with the practice that was established by the Grand Lodge several years ago, Wadsworth Lodge will continue to remit the Lodge Dues on behalf of those Brothers who are shown to be on **Active Military Duty** as of **January 1, 2008**. There is a procedure for applying for this remittance, and any brother who is on active duty who wants to apply for this remittance of their dues must communicate with Brother Tim Martin, Secretary, 7 Burtonwood Place, Delmar, NY, 12054.

"Each Lodge Secretary must obtain from the qualifying member who is on **Active Military Duty** as of **JANUARY 1, 2008**, ONE of the following: **a) a photocopy of the Brother's Military Orders**; or **b) a photocopy of his Military Identification Card**; or **c) a letter on Official Military Stationary from the CO or other military authority attesting to the fact that the Brother is on active military duty.**"

## **An Update on WADSWORTH LODGE CHARITABLE EVENTS**

As you know, Wadsworth Lodge and the other Masonic Lodges in our district are participating with the Salvation Army in their annual holiday fund raising efforts. Thirteen of our Brothers [**John Scott (Katie Scott), Bill Baumann, Tim Martin, Ed Kosinski, Ken Mosher, Bruce Susser, Scott Elwood, Seth Roberts, Donovan White, Cullen Kasunic, Bob Fickies, Bill Carlucci and Jerry McCall**] have volunteered to work as Bell Ringers on some of the following Saturdays: November 24<sup>th</sup>, December 1st, December 8<sup>th</sup>, December 15<sup>th</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup>. Our location is still inside the Mall at the second floor entrance to Macy's (the old Filenes's by the movie theater) at the top of the escalator. If anyone else is interested in helping, please contact John Scott (283-1168) or Tim Martin (439-7998).

## A NEW WADSWORTH WEB SITE

<http://wadsworth417.albanymasonry.org/>

## A NEW DISTRICT MASONIC WEB SITE

<http://home.nycap.rr.com/albanymasons/>

## TRESTLE BOARD

### Wadsworth Lodge Communications 2007-2008

December 12, 2007	Master Mason Degree
December 26, 2007	<b>Lodge Dark in observance of Holiday Season</b>
January 9, 2008	Business Meeting (Program TBA)
<b>January 19, 2008</b>	<b>Wadsworth 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Tiled Table Lodge</b>
January 23, 2008	Entered Apprentice Degree: <b>Officer Move-up Night</b>
February 13, 2008	Ladies Night/Valentines Day Program
February 27, 2008	Fellowcraft Degree: <b>Possible Officer Move-up Night</b>
March 12, 2008	District Deputy Visit
March 26, 2008	Staff Officer Visit
April 9, 2008	Master Mason Degree
April 23, 2008	Annual Reports from the Secretary, Treasurer and Trustees
May 14, 2008	Master's Report; Election, Appointment and Installation of Officers

**\*\*UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, OFFICERS WEAR TUXEDOS AT ALL LODGE MEETINGS, AND ALL LODGE MEETINGS ARE PRECEDED BY A LIGHT DINNER AT 6:30pm AND FOLLOWED BY A COLLATION\*\***

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### District Deputy Visits

R.: W.: Peter Kermani will make his official visits as follows:

January 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Guttenberg Lodge #737
February 4 <sup>th</sup>	Mt. Vernon Lodge #3
March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Wadsworth Lodge #417
March 27 <sup>th</sup>	Van Rensselaer Lodge #87
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	Masters Lodge #5

### District-Wide Masonic Events

Starting Nov. 17, 2007	The Salvation Army Bell Ringer Program
March 2, 2008	District Bowling Tournament
April 19-20, 2008	State Bowling Tournament
April 26-27, 2008	State Bowling Tournament
May 5-6, 2008	Grand Lodge Communication
May 10, 2008	District Widow's Luncheon
May 21, 2008	District Graveyard Memorial Service
TBA	Investiture Service

## Masters & Wardens Meetings

Wadsworth Lodge	January 11, 2008
Masters Lodge	February 8, 2008
Guttenberg Lodge	March 14, 2008
Noah Lodge	April 11, 2008
Berne Lodge	June 6, 2008

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### THE MOTHER LODGE

There was Rundle, Station Master,  
An' Beazeley of the Rail,  
An' 'Ackman, Commissariat,  
An' Donkin o' the jail;  
An' Blake, Conductor-Sargent,  
Our Master twice was 'e,  
With 'im that kept the Europe shop,  
Old Framjee Eduljee.

*Outside-- "Sergeant! Sir! Salute! Salaam!"*

*Inside—"Brother," an' it doesn't do no 'arm.*

*We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square,*

*An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother Lodge out there!*

We'd Bola Nath, Accountant.  
An' Saul, the Aden Jew,  
An' Din Mahammed, draughtsman  
Of the Survey Office, too;  
There was Babu Chuckerbutty,  
An' Amir Singh the Sikh,  
An' Castro from the fittin'-sheds,  
The Roman Catholick.

We 'and't good regalia,  
An' our Lodge was old and bare,  
But we knew the Ancient landmarks,  
An' we kept them to a hair;  
An' looking on it backwards  
It often strikes me thus,  
There ain't such things as infidels,  
Excep', perhaps, its us.  
For monthly after Labour,  
We'd all sit down and smoke,  
(We dursn't give no banquits,  
Lest a brother's caste was broke),  
An' man and man got talkin'  
Religion an' the rest,  
An' every man comparin'

Of the God 'e knew the best.

So man on man got talkin',  
An' not a brother stirred  
Till mornin' waked the parrots  
An' that dam' brain-fever-bird;  
We'd say 'twis 'ighly curious,  
An' we'd all ride 'ome to bed,  
With Mo'amed, God an' Shiva  
Changin' pickets in our 'ead.

Full oft on Gov'ment service  
This rovin' foot 'ath pressed,  
An' bore fraternal greetin's  
To the Lodges east and west,  
Accordin' as commanded  
From Kohat to Singapore,  
But I wish that I might see them  
In my Mother Lodge once more!

I wish that I might see them,  
My Brethren black and brown,  
With the trichies smellin' pleasant  
An' the hog-darn (cigar-lighter) passin' down;

An' the old khansamah (Butler) snorin'  
On the bottle-khana (Pantry) floor,  
Like a Master in good standing  
With my Mother Lodge once more!

*Outside-- "Sergeant! Sir! Salute! Salaam!"*

*Inside—"Brother," an' it doesn't do no 'arm.*

*We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square,*

*An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother Lodge out there!*

Rudyard Kipling

### **Brotherhood Fund**

Please set aside a portion of your charitable donation funds for participation in the Masonic Brotherhood Fund. Your donations to the Masonic Programs supported through the Brotherhood Fund make our fraternity one of the best in the world! Wadsworth Lodge is one of the most outstanding Lodges in the Albany Masonic District for fellowship, ritual and the strength of character of our members. Let us try to make it **the** outstanding Lodge in our district this year with respect to the percentage of giving to the Brotherhood Fund.

If you have any questions, please contact your Brotherhood Chairman, Bro. Edward Kosinski (434-8425; [edjokos@msn.com](mailto:edjokos@msn.com)).

Happy Holidays to All.

Fraternally and Sincerely  
Edward Kosinski  
Wadsworth Lodge #417 Brotherhood Chairman

### **PARTING SHOTS**

**Birthdays:** The following brothers will be celebrating birthdays in the coming months: **Bro. William Godell**, 12/13/06; **R.: W.: Al Krueger**, 12/11/06; **R.: W.: Howard Lasker**, 12/16/06; **Bro. Bruce Susser**, 12/29/06; **Bro. Joseph Rymski, Sr.**, 1/8/07; **R.: W.: Ronald Noll**, 1/17/07; **Bro. Edward Kosinski**, 1/19/07; **Bro. James Johnson**, 1/20/07; **W.: Roger Murphy**, 1/21/07; **Bro. Benjamin Conlon**, 1/22/07; **R.: W.: Fred Fredrickson**, 1/25/07; **W.: Kenneth White**, 1/26/07; and **Bro. John Miller**, 1/27/07.

In addition, the following Brothers have their birthdays recorded in the Lodge data base as **January 1<sup>st</sup>**:

Frederick Anamier, Latson Andrews, Triffon Athan, John Bakke, Peter Blades, Mark Baumbach, George Berkeley, Herbert Berry, Jack Brodie, William Colclough, Davis Cook, Clifford H. Coughlin, Clifford W. Coughlin, William Cramer, Robert Cross, Burr Deitz, Lyle DeVoe, Stanley Dydyck, Luther Dyer, William Fancher, William Fincke, Jamed L. Fuller, James M. Fuller, Richard Fuller, Roy Gilbert, Harry Gochee, Thomas Goodfellow, III, Rufus Gould, James Haire, Alfred Hamilton, Arnold Hamm, Frederick Hartman, Culver Hayes, Jr., Harry Henry, Jr., Floyd Hill, Donald Hillmann, Kenneth Holle, Dean Hotaling, George Kirk, Jr., William Kogler, Theodore Kondoprias, Elmer Krichbaum, Jr., John Kriek, William Lamed, William Languish, Robert Leitch, Jr., James Lund, John Luther, Erwin Marquardt, Addison McRae, Edward Minerley, George Moran, Charles Morris, Kenneth Mosher, Jr., Donald Munro, Jr., Harry Nelson, Harry Obadashian, William Ogren, Walter Osterhout, Glenn Parker, Frederick Pettingell, Daniel Predpall, Walter Rawlings, George Rores, Kurt Rosenfeldt, Adam Sattler, Clayton Simons, Wyman Soule, Thomas Stark, Willard Thomas, James Van de Wal, Richard Wark, Kenneth Weinman, Norman Whitaker, Robert White, William Wiley, Sr., Kenneth Wolven, Charles Wolz and Constantine Yavis.

It is obvious to me that some or all of these Brothers are not New Years babies and that January 1<sup>st</sup> must be a default date in the data base. Please provide our Secretary with your actual birthday so you can be recognized at the appropriate time of the year.

Finally, I apologize if I have missed your birthday. If I did, it is because the Lodge membership list contains incorrect information for you. Please correct this by speaking with our Secretary, Tim Martin.

**Communicate!** Please communicate sickness and distress and /or glad tidings. Brothers, we will never be able to share in your joy or give support to our Brothers, their Widows and

Orphans, unless we communicate. Harmony is the support of all institutions, especially this of ours.

**Volunteers:** The volunteer cleaning program is being reinstated and we will need volunteers who have some time on one Saturday every month to help with cleaning and maintenance of our Masonic Hall. If anyone wants to donate some time to this cause, please contact **Mike Gammans (869-6638)**. This effort helps keep the Masonic Hall beautiful. Your assistance will be greatly appreciated. **Please call** before you come down on any Saturday, since the cleaning dates have not been set. This announcement is intended to gauge the level of participation that can be expected in the future.

**News Articles:** Wadsworth Lodge is always looking for news articles to be published in future newsletters. Please send them to the Secretary or Master.

**Move Recently?** If you have moved recently be sure to let our Secretary know your new address. We save a lot of time and effort by updating our mailing lists as the changes occur. Also, please up-date your membership information with our Secretary by providing him with new telephone numbers and email addresses. We will save money and time if we can distribute the Sideline and other notices electronically to those Brothers whose addresses we have on record. Please consider up-dating your membership information when you remit your 2007 dues.

#### AN OLD MASONIC TOAST

“To him that all things understood,  
To him that found the stone and wood,  
To him that hapless lost his blood  
In doing of his duty.  
To that blest age, and that blest morn  
Wherein those three great men were born,  
Our noble science to adorn  
With Wisdom, Strength and Beauty.”

Anonymous

**HOPING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WILL HAVE A HEALTHY AND ENJOYABLE  
HOLIDAY SEASON.**

**WADSWORTH OFFICERS 2007-08**

Master.....W.: John W. Scott Telephone (518) 283-1168 (res) Email: <a href="mailto:scottydawg2000@aol.com">scottydawg2000@aol.com</a>	Senior Deacon..... Bro. Cullen Kasunic Telephone (518) 209-6335 (Cell) (518) Email: <a href="mailto:cullen_kasunic@yahoo.com">cullen_kasunic@yahoo.com</a>
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Junior Warden...Bro. Paul F. Bailey Telephone (518) 459-9386 (res) (518) 457-5524 (bus) Email: <a href="mailto:paul_bailey@verizon.com">paul_bailey@verizon.com</a>	Sr. Master of Cerem. Bro. Edward Kosinski Telephone (518) 434-8425 (518) Email: <a href="mailto:edjokos@msn.com">edjokos@msn.com</a>
Treasurer .....R.: W.: Stephen S. King Telephone (518) 489-1341 (res) (518) 473-9365 (bus) Email: <a href="mailto:sking1@nycap.rr.com">sking1@nycap.rr.com</a>	Jr. Master of Cerem. Bro. Drew Millier Telephone (518) 885-6751 (res) (518) Email: <a href="mailto:dampfrenchy21@hotmail.com">dampfrenchy21@hotmail.com</a>
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Chaplain ..... V.: W.: Raymond H. Gaul Telephone (518) 355-1714 (res) Email: <a href="mailto:rgaul@nycap.rr.com">rgaul@nycap.rr.com</a> <a href="mailto:raygaul@gmail.com">raygaul@gmail.com</a>	Tyler ...R.: W.: Carl F. Rymski III Telephone (518) 439-3229 E-mail: <a href="mailto:rymski@verizon.net">rymski@verizon.net</a>
Brotherhood Chairman Bro. Edward Kosinski Telephone (H) 434-8425 E-mail: <a href="mailto:edjokos@msn.com">edjokos@msn.com</a> Organist..... W.: Charles Semowich	

Chorister.....	R.: W.:	Fred Stuto	
Trustees.....	W.:	Wilfred C. Baumann	875-6753
	W.:	William T. O’Keefe	477-8654
	R.: W.:	James L. Fuller	456-5122
	R.: W.:	Howard J. Lasker	459-3349
	R.: W.:	William Ogren	482-9326

*Presented by Right Worshipful Peter R. Kermani at Bethlehem Lodge No.85 on November 20, 2007*

## **UNDERSTANDING**

Last Monday evening, in Masters Lodge, I received my 45 year pin. Exactly 45 years ago that day on November 12, 1962, just before I entered the Army, I was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. In preparation for my message this evening, I found myself reflecting upon that night 45 years ago. I soon concluded, reluctantly but realistically, that I wished my understanding of the Craft then was what it is now. My brothers, I will now share with you the reflections of a 45 year old Mason on the subject of understanding.

I have long thought that besides the moral component of Freemasonry, there is an equally important component which involves the word “understanding” as it is described *Masonically* in the description of the Bee Hive. It is understanding which enables us to develop our moral intelligence. It is understanding which directs us to form reasoned judgments about applying the tenets of the Craft to our own lives. It is understanding which directs us towards a practical knowledge of those aspects of the human condition which lead to the development of our own good character. My brothers, it is the unique combination of moral intelligence and understanding found in the “true man” or Master Mason which helps us fulfill our most important Masonic duty - making the most and the best of ourselves.

The second article of The Masonic Compact says: “because I am a Freemason, I know that education and the rational use of the mind are the keys to facing the problems of humanity; therefore, I will bring my questions and my ideas to my Lodge, and strive to advance the growth of my mind alongside my Brothers.” The mind is where your ability to understand rationally resides. This ability is not only the key to facing the problems of humanity, more importantly, it is the key to solving the problems of humanity. The Freemason is a man who by definition is moral and who, when he develops his mind reflectively according to those tenets which have been transmitted to him unimpaired through a succession of ages, will want to automatically add to his own common stock of knowledge and understanding.

What is it that the phrase “advance the growth of my mind” instructs us to do if not to develop the reflective side of ourselves as Freemasons. The growth of our minds includes our ability to understand those things happening around us viewed from the unique perspective of our “understanding” as Master Masons. The more advanced the growth of our minds, the better we understand what we must do to make the most and the best of ourselves; the better we understand just what a privilege it is to be a member of this Fraternity.

The Bee Hive is an emblem of industry. We are told that “he that will so demean himself as not to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding, may be deemed a useless member of society, unworthy of our protection as Masons.” This is an extraordinarily honest statement and expresses a thought like none other in Masonry. We are called useless if we do not, as it says in article 2 of The Compact, “rationally develop our minds alongside our brothers.” The Bee Hive is an emblem of industry and being industrious includes both rationally developing your mind alongside your brothers and adding to your own common stock of knowledge and understanding.

It is instructions like these which separate our Fraternity from the rest: instructions which tell us that “because I am a Freemason, I know that the rational use of the mind is a key to solving the

problems of humanity; therefore I will strive to advance the growth of my mind alongside my Brothers.” Instructions which say “he that will so demean himself as not to endeavor to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding, may be deemed a useless member of society, unworthy of our protection as Masons.” Common stock of knowledge is that whole body of truth, information and tenets acquired by humankind. Common stock of understanding is the intelligent application of the whole body of truth, information and tenets to our own experience as Master Masons. This is what I wish I had understood better 45 years ago.

The Masonic Compact and our Standard Work compliment each other. This is the genius of this newest Masonic document. There is one all-encompassing thread which is common to the success of both and that is a proper application of education. In this context education does not mean simply an academic use of the tools Grand Lodge makes available to us: for example, the MDC Course, The Road to the East, or The 24” Gauge, it also means the disciplined self-improvement of our minds alongside our brothers. As we achieve this, we demonstrate the tenets of the Craft to “men of quality” everywhere. The more effectively we educate our minds *Masonically*, the stronger the Fraternity will grow. This will be a direct result of the proper application of education, knowledge and understanding.

Because I am a Freemason I know that education and the rational use of the mind are keys to facing the problems of humanity; therefore I will bring my questions and my ideas to my Lodge alongside my brothers. The word “alongside” as used here, assumes your brothers are doing the same thing you are - adding to their own common stock of knowledge and understanding and striving to rationally use their own minds. The word “alongside” is used specifically in The Compact to remind us all that to achieve success as a Fraternity, we must work together. This knowledge must become a part of our collective understanding as Masons.

I am absolutely convinced that to increase our numbers we must communicate to men of quality everywhere that one of the most distinguished characteristics of a Freemason is that he is constantly adding to his own common stock of knowledge and understanding. We must perceive this as a benefit of the Craft and be comfortable acknowledging it. If we are not, we must be prepared to be judged useless members of society, unworthy of the protection of Masons. We must understand that if we are unwilling to advance our minds rationally alongside our brothers by adding to our own common stock of knowledge and understanding, there will be consequences. This is what the Bee Hive, an emblem of industry, tells us.

Grand Master Bidnick has focused our attention on the formula  $CCER=M$ ; Communications, Community Service, Education, and Ritual equals membership. The authors of the Compact have focused our attention on the fact that as Masons we know education is the key to facing the problems of humanity. The proper application of education is also common to The Masonic Compact and the Masonic Formula and as with our Standard Work, the key to making any educational endeavor work is the rational use of a mind whose stock of knowledge and understanding is continually being expanded.

To conclude, specifically here is what I wished I understood 45 years ago. Because I am a Freemason, I am a moral man. Because I am a Freemason, I am a man who uses his mind rationally to its greatest advantage. Because I am a Freemason I am reflective and proud of it. Because I am a Freemason I am going to do everything in my power to communicate the benefits of Masonry to men of quality everywhere. Because I am a Freemason, mine is an understanding to the best of my ability of all those things which make this Fraternity great.

We should all try to understand these truths which are really just practical applications of the tenets of our Craft. How else can we possibly hope to live these tenets if we do not strive to advance the rational growth of our minds alongside our brothers? To reflect is to think! When we think reflectively we add to our own common stock of knowledge and understanding. If we do not, we become useless members of society, unworthy of our protection as Masons. This is my understanding. These are my reflections. I only wish I had begun sooner heeding my own “sting of conscience.” My brothers, it is never too late for you to achieve your own “understanding” of

Freemasonry. It took me 45 years. Please, you do it in less.  
Thank you so very much.

*DD Message presented at Ancient Temple No.14, on December 4, 2007*

### **LIVING STONE MASONS**

The word associated in many people's minds with the Masons is stone. I remember visiting the VA Hospital one year during the holidays as part of Howard Lasker's great effort. I walked into a patient's room to bring him his gifts and told him the presents were compliments of the Masons. He then proceeded to regale me with stories about how he too had spent his entire career as a mason, a stone mason. It took me awhile, but I was finally able to explain the difference. We had a nice chat, which was the purpose of the visit, but this story does prove my point about some people's perception of our Fraternity.

More important though is how we understand the significance of the word stone as it is used in our Standard Work. There are stone masons and there are Living Stone Masons. "The Common Gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons to break off the corners of rough stones, the better to fit them for the builders use; but we as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to use it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life, thereby fitting our minds, as living stones, for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

This is one of the most eloquent passages in all Masonry and it occurs early in the First Degree on purpose. For the Entered Apprentice it prepares the stage for what is to come. Here, the words "living stones" are presented for the first time. All of us, no matter how many times we hear this phrase, are struck by its beauty, but its meaning? The better to fit them for the builders use? Who is the builder? Is it us? Is it the GAU? Indeed, the Builder is the GAU! We all need our rough corners, our vices and superfluities, broken off to fit better for His use. Even as Master Masons, we must work hard to fit our minds, for it is the mind which turns our lives into living stones fit for the Builders use when we live them according to the tenets of the Craft.

Let's reflect upon this even further. We understand that our minds guide our lives towards becoming "living stones;" lives which when lived according to the lessons presented in our three Degrees will hopefully be deserving of a place in that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For this to happen, the common gavel must be used for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life. Then our minds can become "living stones" hopefully worthy of the joy of the Lord or immortality. This is why we are Masons - Living Stone Masons.

To understand, we must look more closely at the meaning of the word mind as our Fathers intended it to be used in our Standard Work. A mind can be what you think, as in to speak or change your mind. It can be what the philosopher tells us, our spirit, or what the psychologist tells us, our total conscious state. In my opinion, it is this last concept our fathers had in mind when they encouraged us to prepare our minds as "living stones." They were thinking Masonically of our minds as our entire beings, and they wanted us to understand that only when we used the common gavel to fit them as "living stones" would we hopefully achieve immortality.

In the Historical Lecture, there is another memorable reference to the word stone, but this time it is called an Ashlar. A Lodge has six jewels, three movable and three immovable. Among the movable are the Rough Ashlar and the Perfect Ashlar. At this point, if the Entered Apprentice

has been listening carefully, his eyes should be drawn to the East where the Rough and Perfect Ashlars are displayed. He hears that the Rough Ashlar is a stone in its rude and natural state as taken from the quarry; just as men are Rough Ashlars in their rude and natural state before they become Perfect Ashlars. If he is paying attention, it should dawn on him that he is a Rough Ashlar in its rude and imperfect state and that there is a long road ahead before he becomes a Perfect Ashlar.

His attention should next be drawn to the difference between the Rough and Perfect Ashlars. "The Perfect Ashlar is one prepared by the workman to be adjusted by the working tools of Fellowcraft." These words should bring to mind the description he heard earlier of the common gavel "which is an instrument used by Operative Masons to break off the corners of rough stones, the better to fit them for the Builder's use." What is the Builder's use? It is "that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by education, our own endeavors and the blessing of Deity." The Entered Apprentice has now been given specific instructions on how to travel that long road towards becoming a Perfect Ashlar. This is Masonry's great strength. When we understand, we never flounder. There are always instructions. There is always the Brotherhood. At the conclusion of his First Degree the Entered Apprentice must understand that the state of perfection at which we all hope to arrive is Immortality. He must understand that this is achieved by education, his own endeavors and the blessing of Deity. He must understand that education means learning about Freemasonry, studying its tenets and figuring out how best to apply them to his own life. He must understand that he achieves immortality by constantly endeavoring to divest his heart and conscience of all their vices and superfluities so that his mind will be fitted as a living stone for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, "so that in age, as a Master Mason, he may enjoy the happy reflection consequent upon a well-spent life and die in the hope of a glorious immortality." This is Masonry's purpose. We are about to come full Masonic circle. The Entered Apprentice now understands that he becomes a Perfect Ashlar by education, his own endeavors and finally the concept which to the reflective Mason should tie all its lessons together thus closing the circle - by the blessing of Deity. What is the blessing of Deity? "May it be your portion to hear from Him who sitteth as the Judge Supreme, the welcome words, 'well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.'" The blessing of Deity is the joy of the Lord which is attained by living every moment of your life as a Perfect Ashlar, as a Living Stone Mason.

Master Masons who allow their lives to be guided by the tenets of the Craft are Living Stone Masons whose hope it is to arrive at that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. This goal is achieved when they use the common gavel to divest their hearts and consciences of all their vices and superfluities - an understanding so simple and yet so profound. My brothers, I have always believed the lessons of our Masonic Degrees are infinite and only begin to reveal themselves upon constant repetition. This is why it is so vitally important that we participate to achieve Masonic understanding - further Light in Masonry.

The word stone means one thing to those out there, stone mason, and another to those of us in here, Living Stone Mason. To us it is a reminder of all that is necessary to achieve the hope of a glorious immortality and that the word hope is used specifically in our Standard Work because the Fraternity makes no guarantees. All we can do is endeavor to live our lives as Living Stone Masons.

My brothers, the remarkable phrase "living stones" has a still greater meaning. The tenets of Freemasonry, each and every one, are themselves "living stones" which fit together perfectly and when properly reflected upon and understood will, like the Initial shining brightly in the East, guide us all towards the hope of a glorious immortality and joy of the Lord.