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# The Lyceum

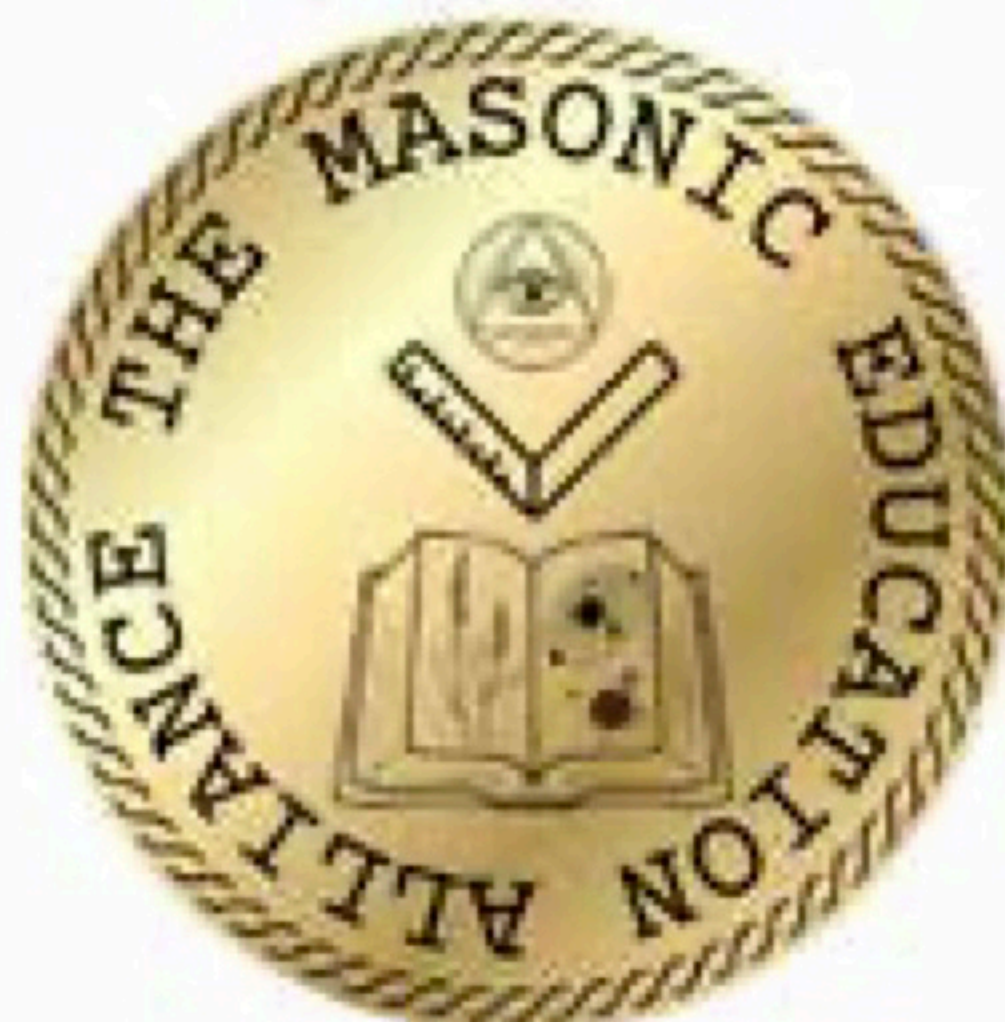
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A Publication of  
The Masonic Education Alliance

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# From the Desk of R.H. Johnson



## History:

Started in xxxx, The Lyceum, an e-magazine dedicated to Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, has undergone a necessary evolution in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Originally a publication of the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand Lodge of Illinois, the magazine was the collaborative effort of two committee members. However, with the departure of one member and the Grand Lodge's change in direction, The Lyceum faced the threat of going defunct. In response, all previous issues have been rebranded, removing any association with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While previous versions may still be available on certain websites, they are no longer offered by the publisher. These changes in branding ensure that The Lyceum can continue as a free and independent publication, focused on promoting Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, regardless of oppositional forces in any Grand Lodge organization. It is important to note that the content, authors, and publisher of The Lyceum do not represent any statements or positions of any Grand Lodge, unless expressly stated.

## About:

The Masonic Education Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative, has emerged as a beacon of Light in the realm of Freemasonry. Born out of the necessity to bridge the gap left by dwindling education committees within various Grand Jurisdictions, this alliance has taken on the responsibility of providing a limitless educational magazine dedicated to all things Freemasonry. Unrestricted by the restraints of any particular jurisdiction, the Alliance unites Masonic scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around the world to create a platform where knowledge can flow freely and uninhibited.

In the past, education committees were the pillars of Masonic educational activities, disseminating knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the Craft within their respective jurisdictions. However, due to various circumstances, these committees have been effectively gutted, leaving a void in the educational landscape of Freemasonry. Recognizing this critical need for a comprehensive educational platform, the Masonic Education Alliance was formed.

Unlike traditional Masonic publications, which are often confined by the limitations of a specific Grand Jurisdiction, the Masonic Education Alliance embraces the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Its mission is to foster a love for learning, share profound insights, and explore all aspects of Freemasonry in an unbiased and global

manner. By removing these boundaries, the Alliance opens doors for Masons and non-Masons alike to delve into the mysteries, history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry from diverse perspectives.

Through the publication of a cutting-edge digital magazine, the Masonic Education Alliance brings forth a wealth of articles, essays, research papers, and creative works that elevate the intellectual understanding of Freemasonry. Drawing upon the expertise of its contributors, the Alliance takes readers on a journey of intellectual expansion, inviting them to explore the depths of Masonic teachings and traditions.

In this rapidly changing world, where traditional modes of education are transforming, the Masonic Education Alliance stands as a beacon of progress and innovation. By harnessing the power of technology, this alliance is able to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience across continents and jurisdictions. As a digital platform, the Alliance ensures that no Mason is left behind and that access to Masonic education is available to all seekers, regardless of geographical boundaries or political constraints.

In essence, the Masonic Education Alliance is more than just a magazine; it is a revolution in Masonic education. With an unwavering commitment to intellectual growth, unlimited collaboration, and global connectivity, the Alliance cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community of Freemasons hungry for knowledge. Together, members of the Alliance strive to preserve the essence of Freemasonry while embracing the transformative power of education in an ever-evolving world.

## The Seal:

The seal of the Masonic Education Alliance embodies the organization's commitment to providing rich and unbiased content to its readers. The golden hue represents the wealth of knowledge and information offered, while the borders ensure the protection of the Alliance from external influences and attacks. The Square symbolizes the Alliance's dedication to staying true to its research and providing accurate information to its readers. The presence of the All-Seeing Eye signifies the recognition of a higher power, while the book represents the Book of Nature, with a stalk of vegetation on one page and an illustration of a germ and the solar system on the other. Absent is the Compass, for the search for knowledge knows no boundaries.

*R.H. Johnson*

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# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Brothers all,

It's October, which means Grand Lodge Annual Communications, Halloween, Fall-time, leaves, cooler weather, and more. This month's issue is themed after two items. Halloween and Grand Lodge Annual Communications. We've got several articles this month centered around the strange and unusual. Ghosts, UFOs, Magic...

Grand Lodge Sessions, or Annual Communications, was an excellent venue this year. It was a fantastic time to experience fellowship and democracy and many educational opportunities. In this month's issue, you'll find a section dedicated to GLAC, including one from Ill. Bro. Steve Harrison, that is sure to make you laugh.

Ill. Bro. Chad Lacey, 33°, has this month's featured article. Do not skip this one--it's a page-turner! Have you ever heard of the famed astronaut Brother Edgar Mitchell? He was involved in some fascinating paranormal research, and there's an article all about it. You'll notice the cover of this month's issue has an image of famous Brother Harry Houdini. In this issue, we've printed an article about an annual seance designed to contact Houdini from beyond the grave!

Darin A. Lahners brings us a bit of Masonic Satire in an article that calls attention to some of the Masonic...minutia. He makes some great laughs and introspective points in this parody called "Night of the Living Freemasons." We've also decided to pull an Oration from 1861, the first year of the Civil War.

The oration is a special one, given by, at the time, RW Brother Bromwell to the Grand Lodge of Illinois. In beautiful prose, he speaks to us from over 160 years ago, yet what he says is still relevant today.

I hope you enjoy this special issue. Moving forward, your Masonic Education committee will have each issue themed, and we hope this adds to your Masonic education endeavors. Yours in Brotherhood,

*R. H. Johnson*

R. H. Johnson



# Illinois Lodge of Research

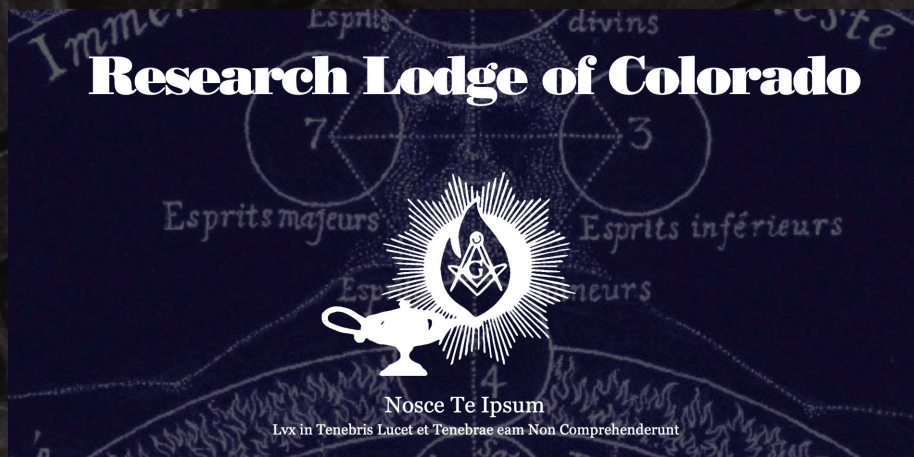
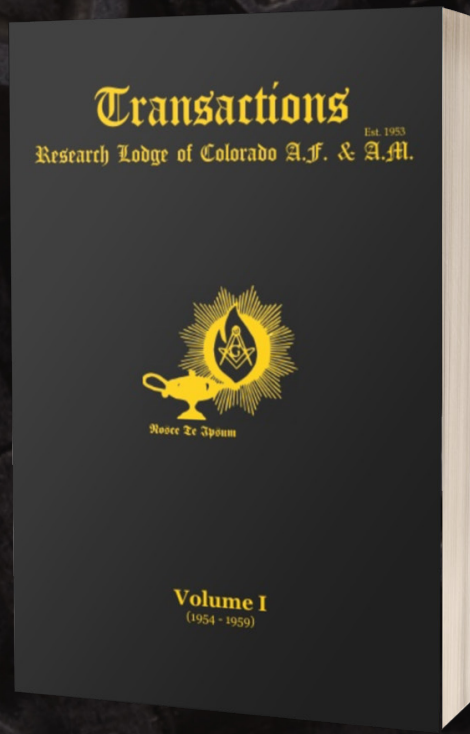
## News

- Congratulations to the newly elected Worshipful Master David A. Truax and his elected and appointed officers!
- Transactions (the research papers) are being readied for printing and will be distributed to those members who want hard copies via USPS. All members with a valid email address will receive them via email as well.
- Thank you to Illustrious Brother Brian L. Pettice, 33°, for an excellent Keynote presentation at this year's event. The talk was recorded and will be featured in the Member's Section of the website for the edification of all our members.
- The Illinois Lodge of Research aims to have a productive year. Additional meetings, more research papers, and maybe even some surprises along the way.

~Your Lodge of Research

[IllinoisLodgeofResearch.org](http://IllinoisLodgeofResearch.org)





**Since 1953, the Research Lodge of Colorado has been producing quality Masonic Education papers. Over the last three years, the Lodge has worked tirelessly to compile the transactions into an amazing volume that is beautifully curated and printed.**

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# A Candlelit Confession

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°, Member, Committee on Masonic Education

Each of us has heard at least one story which we would never believe to be true except for the person telling it. There are precious few people in my life that I know would never deceive me. I will believe they are telling the truth, no matter how incredible it sounds. The story I am about to share is from just such a person. I will not use his name because I did not have time to ask his permission before I submitted this writing. He and I served together at Marine Corp Air Station El Toro from 1995-1998. I was the best man at his wedding, and we are still dear friends these 24 years later. The details of how he came to tell me this story may sound contrived, as if I intend to make the scene more 'spooky.' I assure you I have not. As you will soon discover, this story does not require embellishment. My friend and I worked in a building at the base of an air-traffic control tower, situated at the intersection of the runways in the middle of the airbase. Our job was to monitor the radio and weather equipment during the night shift. The radio frequencies we supported were used by search and rescue, and other emergency services, so they could never be left unattended. We slept on cots in this room in case an alarm sounded, or a call was made. Our location and the time of day meant that we were always completely isolated.

One late evening a Southern California storm began to blow. It became so strong that we kicked the wooden block out from the foot of the door to our shop, to stop the dust and debris from blowing in. The block was there because we were too lazy to type the code to unlock it every time we needed to enter. I pulled the bar, which ran the width of the steel door, latching it securely. Soon after, the power went out. There were generators at the Transmitter and Receiver Stations situated in the hills around us, but our building was not serviced by them. We found a scented candle jar, which we used to light up a small area of the room more practically than a flashlight could.

We then resumed our normal procedure as we would on any night. We played cards. On the occasions when there were four people on the crew, the game was Spades. With just the two of us, it was Gin Rummy. It was now well after midnight, and the storm got steadily worse. The wind was gathering all sorts of stones and debris and showering the steel door behind us.

The combination of the noise, our isolation, and the effect a single candle has in a large room made us both uneasy. We halted the game as all our attention was drawn to that steel door. We sat in silence as we heard what genuinely sounded like something trying to claw its way in.

I won't say that I was afraid, but I will admit to being spooked. In defiance of what I knew to be nothing but wind and noise, I marched up to the door and kicked it open. Of course, there was nothing there but dust and wind and all sorts of dry plant matter, which came flying in all around me. I pulled the door closed again, satisfied that I had banished any childish fear that occasioned the situation. When I turned to rejoin our small sphere of light, I could see the face of my friend. He was hunched forward, with his forearms on his knees, his head turned upward. He said, "I could never be like you."

I asked him what he meant, and he proceeded to confess that he has a paralyzing fear of the kind of 'bump-in-the-night' sensations like the one we just experienced. It's unheard of for a young, proud Marine to admit fear of any kind. To admit being paralyzed by the childish sort of fears associated with the monster under the bed is unthinkable. I resumed my place at the table and asked him why he was so afraid. The answer he gave is where the real story now begins...

My friend, an only child, lived with his single mother in a house she rented in Nebraska. He lived in this place during the fourth and fifth years of his life. This house was designed with a staircase leading to a spacious, finished attic. The staircase was along one of the long sides of the room. On the short wall at the front of the house, there was a large picture window. His bed was located on the opposite wall. This left him with a huge area to play and scatter toys about. The door of the staircase was directly against the bottom stair, it opening outward into a hallway near the kitchen.

Shortly after they moved in, his mother was startled awake by a series of thumps followed by a loud bang on the attic door. Opening it, she found her son

crumpled in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. She helped him back up into bed, likely assuming that he was unfamiliar with the new space as he searched for the bathroom or a drink of water. But it kept happening. Frustrated and afraid for his safety, she asked him why he kept falling down the stairs. He replied, "I made the old lady mad."

On another occasion, my friend wandered into his mother's room while she was getting ready. She had a wardrobe cabinet, the doors of which were swung open to either side, with a metal bar that spanned the top to hang garments from. As he was chatting with his mother, he entered this cabinet and stretched his hands upward so he could hang from the bar. Both doors of the cabinet violently slammed shut. His mother jumped up to open them, but she couldn't. They were frozen shut. Panicked, she tried with all her might to beat the doors open, screaming to her silent child all the while. After a few terrifying moments, the force holding the doors abated, and she flung them open effortlessly. Her son was lying motionless on the floor of the cabinet, his face dark blue.

Instinctively, she grabbed him by the ankles and shook him upside down. Out poured a steady stream of nuts, washers, bolts, and screws. This hardware rang loudly as it bounced around the bottom of the cabinet. Finally, she emptied his mouth of enough of this material that he could spit out the rest, and the color began to return to his face. When mother and son were sufficiently calmed down from the ordeal, she returned to her bedroom to examine the wardrobe. She collected a heaping handful of mismatched hardware, which was strewn across the floor. None of the fasteners were missing, or even loose, from the inside of the cabinet. The hinges, the door handles, and the bracket that holds the metal bar, all were securely fastened. Turning to the doors, she confirmed what she already knew. There was no locking mechanism. No latch. No lever or catch or any such thing. The doors can't be locked.

I asked my friend to tell me what happened in that attic. He said that late at night, after he had gone to bed, the ghostly figure of a very old woman would frequently appear. Her whole body floated in the air, a few feet above the ground. Her skin was deeply wrinkled and moldy. Her long, gray hair was wild about her head and shoulders. She wore a filthy, tattered garment. It was a sort of nightgown. It had some modest decorative lacework around the collar, but was otherwise plain. Her bare feet hung down

below the bottom of the garment, which was particularly shredded and darkly stained. The most terrifying feature of this specter was the expression on her face.

Here was the look of limitless, all-consuming rage. She would circle around his large bedroom, making an oval path through the rectangular space. She drifted around and around in the same direction. At some point during her circuit, when she passed near his bed, she would snatch him out of it. Sometimes by the scruff of his pajamas at his neck, at others by an arm or leg, whatever she happened to catch hold of. She would continue in her path around the room with him in tow. She flailed him around like a rag doll as she went, banging him off of the walls, the ceiling, and the floor as she drifted around the room. He would eventually be released at a place that would send him crashing down the stairs. It happened so often that mom stopped investigating the noise. He would climb back up the stairs and return to bed.

He developed the nightly strategy of rushing into his bed and as deep under the covers as he could get. He would then will himself to sleep as fast as he possibly could. This would not prevent him from being snatched out of bed, but it would spare him the agony of wondering if the old lady was coming that night. During one of his nightly routines, he was kept awake by a heavy thunderstorm. The sound of the rain against the roof directly above him and the crashes of thunder made sleep impossible. The large picture window on the opposite side of his room did not have a curtain. He lay with his back to that window, facing the wall adjacent to his bed. The lights from the street below shone through the leaves and branches of a large tree in the front yard. This projected a tangled web of chaotic shadows on the wall in front of him. With every blast of wind and flash of lightning, the figures on the wall thrashed frantically. Then he realized some of the shadows weren't moving.

He could see the shadow made by the outline of his body as he lay in bed. Just above his elevated shoulder, right in front of him, he saw a stationary shadow of what looked like a young woman's face. But it was backward. The eyes, nostrils, and mouth were light, and the rest of the face was shadow. If you held a flashlight behind a mask and pointed it at the wall, you would create a similar image. The figure looked to be wearing a distinctive hat. It was the sort of starched, small box-shaped hat that a



nurse would have worn years ago. As he stared into this hollow-eyed face, he tried to convince himself that it was caused by the tree branches. Then the shadow of a hand slowly rose up beside the face, and waved at him.

He pulled the covers over his head and clenched his eyes shut with all his might. Mercifully, he soon fell asleep. Many years later, as an adult, he asked his mother about “that house” they lived in. She asked him how much he remembered about it, and was quite distressed when she learned just how much. She said that strange things started happening right after they moved in. Items would go missing or be moved around, there would be strange noises, and devices would start and stop working inexplicably. She also mentioned that he fell down the stairs “all the time.”

This activity increased to such an extent, that one evening the door to the dishwasher flung open. The wire racks shot out, and all of the contents flew violently around the kitchen, shattering everything that could be smashed. The knives and forks, or anything with a point, stuck into the ceiling. She was grateful that the noise didn't wake him at the time, and she quickly cleaned up the mess so he wouldn't be frightened.

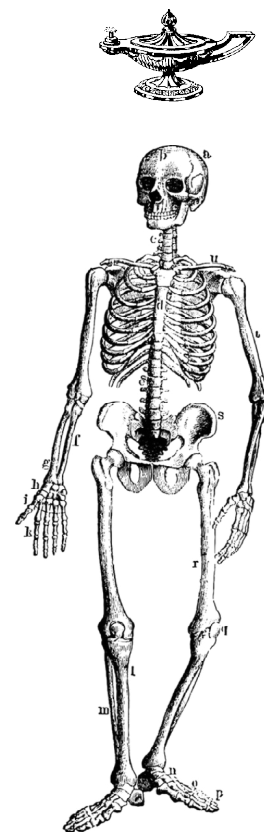
She said her breaking point happened on a cool summer evening, about one year after they arrived. She was sitting on the couch in the living room, watching a movie with a friend. The front door was open to let the night breeze in. There was a wooden screen door, which, when unlatched, allowed the wind to open it a little before the spring pulled it back. It made a loud rap, followed by two soft ones. And so this rhythmic sound continued over and over. RAP, rap, rap. RAP, rap, rap. It eventually became enough of a distraction that she decided to get up and close the door. She pulled the screen door shut and then locked it with a hook-and-eye latch. She closed the main door and locked the deadbolt. As she started to turn away from the door, she heard the deadbolt unlock. She watched as the door knob turned, the main door slowly opened to where it was before, the latch was lifted out of the eyelet, the handle of the screen door turned, and it resumed its RAP, rap rap. That was the last night they spent in that house.

I personally find it hard to imagine that the resumption of a banging screen door was the straw that broke the camel's back. If I had to carry a step ladder into the kitchen, to retrieve the forks and knives from the ceiling, I would be sharing my new mailing address

with friends and family that same night. I thanked my friend for sharing his amazing, yet traumatic story. I told him that I was interested in visiting that house someday if it still exists. He told me he would point it out to me but that he will not go inside it for anything in this world. I don't blame him.

I have one last piece of this story to share. Many years later, long after I left the military, I attended a dinner party. I was enjoying a conversation with a couple about my age, and the subject of the supernatural arose. I decided to share the part of the story involving the shadow face on the wall. When I described how the face looked like a backlit mask and that the figure wore an old-time nurse's hat, the blood ran out of the face of the lady I was talking with.

Her head shot over to her husband. It turns out that he has seen that exact same face many times and told her all about it. And he did not see it with the eyes of a young boy, whose facts might be dismissed as nothing but an over-active imagination. He was in his late teens and early 20s at the time. As you can imagine, our conversation lasted well into the night. Whatever this hollow-eyed entity is, I have no doubt that it dwells somewhere among us. If you're like me, you enjoy learning about other people's ghost stories, but you don't want one of your own! I hope that you and your family have a safely, spooky Halloween.



# The Last Chance Halloween

by Steven L. Harrison, FMLR, 33°



I figured I'd better get upstairs. I didn't want to go to the séance... yes, the séance... and after that the top three floors would be closed — forever. I'd worked in the building three years and never been up there. This was my last chance. With no working elevators, I hoofed it up the stairs and emerged in a dark fourth-floor hallway of the doomed building. My eyes adjusted and I slowly made my way to the rooms in the northwest corner. I opened the door and entered the fabled room. There were no drapes covering the windows and the bright light nearly blinded me. The room was stark and dirty. To my left was a broken wheelchair. A sink jutted out from the far wall. Its basin was stained and dusty. Beneath it was a wastebasket — full. A bed frame with an old mattress was over by the window. All told, the room was disappointing. It just didn't seem... well... as auspicious as it should have, given what had happened there many, many years ago on Halloween.

Halloween and Freemasonry: There are probably many tie-ins what with all the costumes worn in degree work, skulls and other symbols; and that's before the conspiracy theorists weigh in. Occasionally, though, the pairing of the mysterious holiday and Freemasonry brings to mind images of Harry Houdini, a life member of St. Cecile Lodge 568, New York City.

A man of mystery, you could almost say Broth-

er Harry lived Halloween 24/7. Aside from being, arguably, the world's greatest magician and escape artist, Houdini maintained an abiding interest in the paranormal. He did not, however deceitfully promote it as he felt many did. He despised fraudulent seers and mediums and worked tirelessly to expose their chicanery. He felt everything he couldn't expose as being fake must be real.

He made many attempts to communicate with his mother after she died, but found no evidence of contact. Still, feeling communication with “the other side” was possible, he made a pact with his wife Bessie that the first to die would attempt to contact the other through a coded message. No one knows what the full message was, but part of the pact was that Houdini would open a pair of silver handcuffs they owned. Bessie never received any communication from Houdini after his death, but hundreds of psychics claimed they did.

On Halloween 1936, the 10th anniversary of his death, she held a final séance in which he failed to appear. After that, Bess declared the search over and said she believed he could not come back, “It is finished.” Two years later she created a firestorm in the world of spiritualists when, playing herself in the film *Religious Racketeer*, she said she did not believe communication with the dead was possible.

During his life the great Houdini did everything he could to separate the fake aspects of spiritualism from what he thought might be real. Shortly before his death he testified before congress against spiritualists and fortune tellers licensed to practice in Washington, DC. So adamant was he that they were charlatans, the hearing broke out in a shouting match and some of the spectators tried to attack Houdini.

On the other hand, still believing there was something to communication with the spiritual world, he worked with Thomas Edison in an attempt to develop a “delicate psychic detecting instrument.” The object

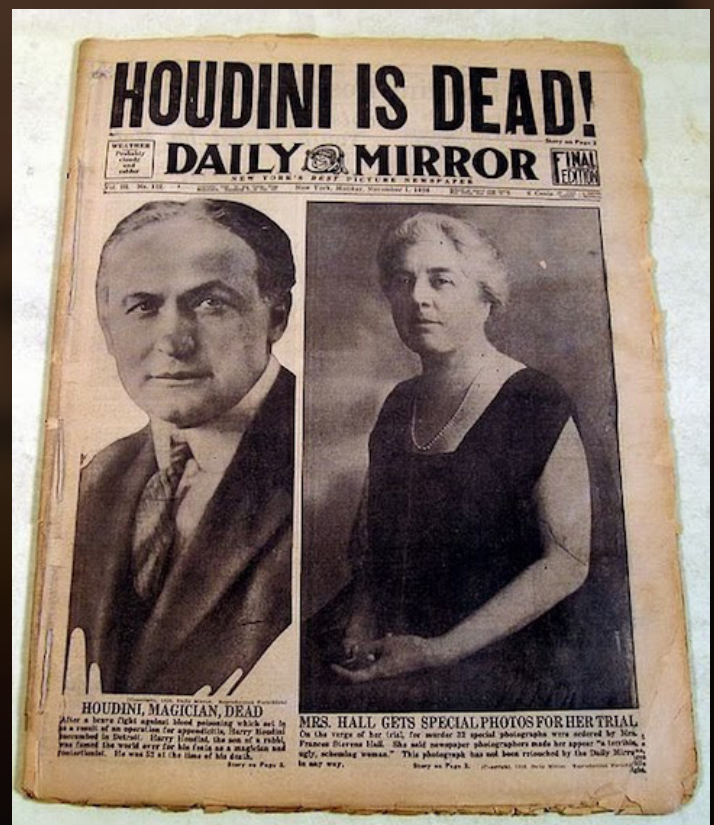
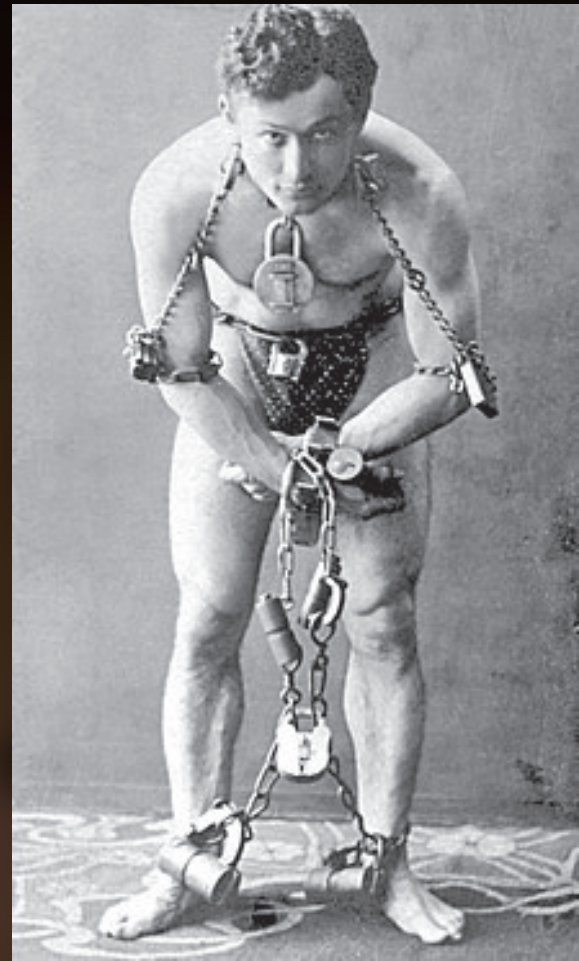
of the “ghost machine,” as it was called, was to be so sensitive it could detect the presence or touch of an ethereal being from another world. There is no evidence the machine was ever built.

On October 26, 1926, Houdini received a painful blow to the stomach in a demonstration at McGill University in Montreal. Contrary to popular opinion, most medical experts believe the blow was unrelated to the appendicitis attack that followed; however, Houdini failed to get treatment thinking the pain in his stomach was due to the punch to his abdomen. After his appearance in Montreal, he traveled to Detroit where he collapsed at the end of a performance. Five days later, on Halloween, Harry Houdini died.

I was standing in a nondescript empty room on the fourth floor of old Grace Hospital in Detroit. The building, once considered progressive and modern, had deteriorated to the point that it would be torn down in a few months. I ran the Information Technology department downstairs and once my group moved out, the wrecking ball would move in. I soaked it all in. Somehow it just didn't seem that special, but shortly several people and the news media — this year including Time Magazine — would gather there as they had done for years on Halloween.

This wasn't just any room. This was the very place where, on October 31, 1926, Brother Harry Houdini died. I took a final look and turned to leave. As I walked away, people filed past me to enter the room for Houdini's last séance.

Houdini, as had been the case on every Halloween in Grace Hospital since he died, did not show up.



# Tales from Grand Lodge Sessions

A SHORT COLLECTION OF TIMELESS TALES RELATING TO  
GRAND LODGE SESSIONS FOR 2022

## \*Editors Note\*

*Each year Freemasons from around the globe attend or make the pilgrimage to what is called "Grand Lodge Sessions" or Grand Lodge Annual Communications." These meetings are sometimes held more often, i.e., on a quarterly basis or as needed and called for by a jurisdiction's Grand Lodge.*

*The purpose is to bring together Freemasons of a jurisdiction for various administrative tasks relating to the administration of Freemasonry. Business, financials, and even rituals all have a part. These meetings are generally open to all Master Masons, and while voting may be restricted to only certain members, e.g., the various executive officers (The Worshipful Master and Wardens) of a lodge--the general membership is not only allowed to attend but encouraged! In the pages that follow are a series of articles that deal with, in, and around Grand Lodge Annual Communications. This first one is sure to make you laugh.*

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## The Cowan

by Bro.: Steven L. Harrison, FMLR, 33°

A few years ago at Missouri's Grand Lodge session, the Grand Secretary asked me, with approval from the Grand Master, to take some photographs of the tiled Grand Lodge meeting.

We held the meeting in a large conference center jam-packed with over 1,000 Brothers. As I walked around the room trying to figure out the best angles for the photographs it became apparent I wouldn't get a good photo from the convention floor. Fortunately, there was an office area above with a bank of draped windows overlooking the cavernous meeting room. That, I figured, would give me the best vantage point for the shot the Grand Secretary wanted.

I hauled my equipment upstairs and entered the office. There, I peeked out of each window to determine the best angle for my impending work of art. I

selected the appropriate window, opened the drapes just enough to stick my head and camera through, knelt and started snapping pictures.

When I lowered my camera I noticed a flurry of activity on my end of the room. Right below me, Brothers were waving their arms and pointing at me. Some were even heading toward the door. Momentarily, the meeting stopped. The Brothers had exposed a cowan in their midst... and it was me!

Being a man of decisive action, I decided it was time to make a quick exit. "Feet," I thought, "don't fail me now." I grabbed my stuff, whirled around and prepared to make myself scarce. Too late.

As I stood up, the office door flew open. There, holding his angled rod in front of his body with both hands, legs planted apart, silent and ready for battle, stood the Grand Pursuivant.

Do I need to mention it was an uncomfortable moment?

I didn't know the man but it was pretty obvious he was a Brother. As a few others began to show up behind him, I introduced myself and told him what I was up to. It didn't take too long to convince him I was legitimate and the crisis quickly ended. A few smiles even broke out.

I suppose there are some things to be learned from the incident... like, for example we probably should have announced that the photos were being taken. Mainly, however, I learned some Brothers apparently have eyes in the back of their heads, since they were all facing away from me when I took the pictures. Although I edited the Missouri Freemason magazine at the time I never published the photo. The only use ever made of it was a copy that now hangs in the Masonic Museum at the Masonic Complex in Columbia.

That Grand Pursuivant, Richard Smith, was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri in September, 2016. We've gotten to know each other

pretty well and every once in a while we share a smile recalling the way we met.



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## ***The Masonic Pilgrimage***

*by RWB: R.H. Johnson, PDDGM*



Well, it's just four days until I hop in WB: Scott Dueball's car, and we ride down to Springfield, Illinois, for the Grand Lodge annual meeting. We call it a pilgrimage because we are called back home per se. It's a time of great fellowship, of rekindling the fire that burns inside the active Freemason. All year long, I look forward to the Grand Lodge Sessions and to seeing the faces of brothers I only see once in a great while.

It's a time to gain new insights and learn new things, as the Grand Lodge has panels and learning sessions set up for Masons with a gamut of interests. And don't even get me started on the shopping. I love Masonic trinkets as much as the next Brother, but man... at Grand Lodge, it's definitely over the top. I will definitely be found perusing the tables for hours.

As Grand Lodge Sessions wraps up for me, I hope many of you are getting ready for your own Masonic pilgrimages, whether it's to your Grand Lodge pro-

ceedings or a reunion, or perhaps a special time for blue lodge events. Whatever it is, have fun, share in fellowship and stay on the level!

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## ***Reflections of the 2022 G.L.A.C.***

*by Bro.: Justus E. Fischer, Committee on Education*

My first time going to the Grand Lodge of Illinois sessions, we packed the car with brethren and hit the road heading for Southern Illinois, about 200 miles. I had no idea what to expect. It was a town I'd never visited before, a route I'd never traveled. Upon entry to our hotel sometime in the early part of the evening, a small crowd gathered in the front lobby—handshakes, laughter, and warm embraces filled the air. Despite the new environment, a sense of familiarity warmed my heart. I saw my brothers there, and they were glad to see me. I was delighted to find some new faces amidst the crowd. A feeling of belonging and community was present. We exchanged ideas and philosophies of self-improvement through Freemasonry. I felt that was needed considering most of the world spent the year prior in isolation due to a global pandemic. A sense of belonging and togetherness filled the void of lockdowns and quarantine, despite the political polarities and social unrest as a culmination of the current events in the world. Freemasonry brought us together for a weekend in October in Springfield, Illinois. The land of Abe Lincoln himself, our beloved State Capitol. I made life-long friends because of my personal decision to step out of my comfort zone and break out of my shell.

For the 2022 Grand Lodge Annual Communication, I had the pleasure of staying at a brother's home, whom I had the opportunity to meet for the first time the year prior at the previous Grand Lodge assembly. Upon my arrival on Thursday evening, I saw a decent-sized crowd gathering in front of the Abe Lincoln Double-Tree hotel. The group outside of the hotel appeared to be very eager for some Illinois Masonic history. The year prior, there was an informal tour around Springfield hosted by some of the brethren at St. Pauls Lodge No. 500. This tour was an hour-long walk around the downtown area, highlighting some Masonic sites of interest. This year, the crowd gathered was more extensive and eager to learn. Some fellow members of the group and non-members of the public sharing this experience, women, and children learning about Illinois Masonic history.

The following morning, Freemasons from across the state would gather at the “BOS Center” in downtown Springfield for the annual session. A four-hour-long meeting involving the internal operations and business of the Grand Lodge. This year there were some



crucial discussions concerning our Masonic jurisdiction. The opening ceremony ended around noon and was concluded by various Masonic libation events and educational workshops available to our members.

With a few hours of downtime under my belt, I grabbed a quick lunch and headed down to one of my favorite gems in the city, a bookstore named “Prairie

Archives.” This time would be my third visit in two years to the store, and I have yet to be disappointed in my findings. I make a concerted effort to rescue any books I can find on the topic of Freemasonry. A pet dog in the store always gives me a friendly greeting while walking around the aisles of books, almost as if the dog was happy to see me again.

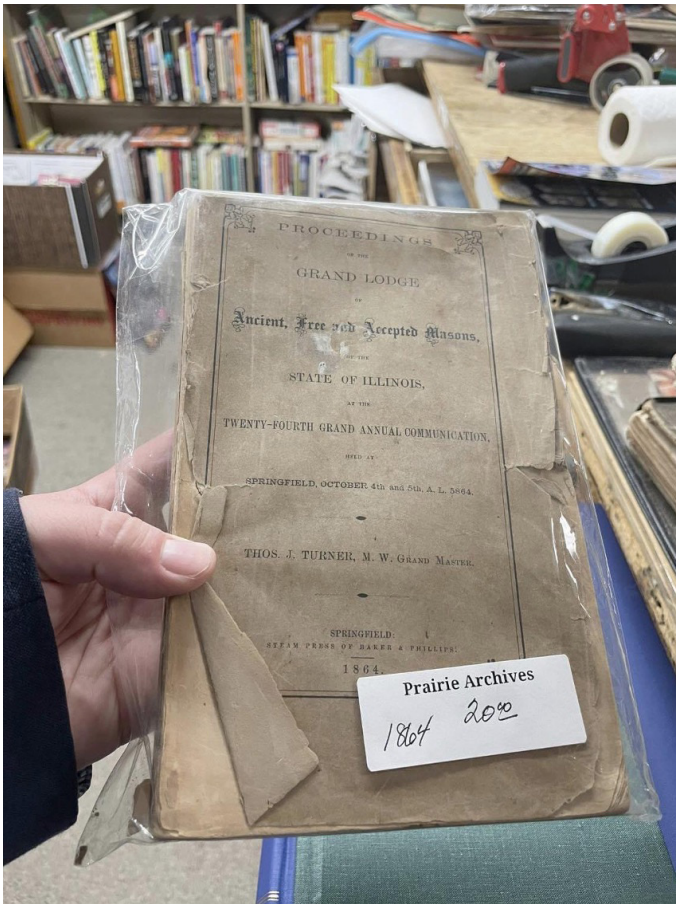
I was pleased to find a softcover edition of the 1864 Grand Lodge proceedings. I am looking forward to giving this book a little love and care and providing it with a good home.



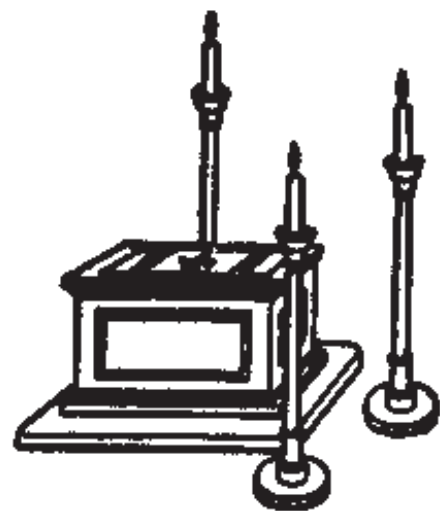
After the bookstore visit, I headed to the hotel in which the Illinois Lodge of Research would commence at 3:00 pm sharp at one of the hotel conference rooms downtown. It was an eventful meeting filled with discussion on the progress of the lodge and the next election of officers there. Member Jordan Kelly read a heartfelt obituary for a dearly departed member who had fell victim to a recent tragedy.

The lodge would conclude with a reflective and introspective lecture. This topic of “motivation mission and Masonic education.” It was relevant to self-improvement as a means to end bigoted ideals concerning the Craft. I enjoyed seeing an influx of new members attending this meeting. These members

have a growing passion for learning. I hope that this interest will remain for some time.



the level, we can have these heartfelt and poignant discussions without having to belittle one another, without fearing backlash and repercussions because of how we may vote on specific issues. We are all free-born and well-recommended; in our beloved country, we have the freedom of speech. As brother masons, it is best to exorcize this right to advance our fraternity for future generations. We sometimes get it right or wrong, but there is always room for improvement and growth each year. Our fraternity is accountable to a democratic process, where members vote on every issue concerning the Grand Lodge. It is not an authoritarian dictatorship. We, as members, have a voice, and it is our right to be heard. As long as our hearts remain in the right place and if we have Freemasonry's best interest in mind. I believe that our light will continue to shine bright in our jurisdiction. This year's visit was well worth the trip. I will take back many fond memories with me for years to come.



My takeaway from this year's annual sessions is that we may not share the same religious beliefs or political affiliations. However, we can come together yearly to improve ourselves in Masonry. What that means is entirely up to interpretation. We desire to have our voices heard and to share our own beliefs in the think-tank that is Freemasonry. As men on

# NIGHT OF THE LIVING FREEMASONS

by WB.: Darin A. Lahners, AEO Eastern Area, Member Committee on Maosnic Education

I've been studying our rituals and history for quite some time now, and I've discovered the secret meaning of Freemasonry. Freemasonry is teaching us about Zombies. In fact, all your degrees are training you for the inevitability of you rising from the grave. Yes, my brothers. I know it's not something you were prepared to hear, but it's true. Freemasonry teaches us all how to act as a zombie. It's only through carefully studying of our ritual and practices that this will become apparent. Before I get into details, let's discuss the characteristics of a zombie.

In film and television, zombies have the following characteristics:

- They were dead but have somehow arisen from the grave
- They can move; however, they can be depicted as moving fast or very slow.
- They are in a decaying state
- Unending Hunger
- Clumsy
- Vulnerable to the destruction of the brain
- Unaffected by injuries, except ones that hurt the brain
- Zombies can only multiply by making other zombies.
- They do not attack other zombies
- They are industrious

Let's break this down:

Zombies were dead but have somehow arisen from the grave. One only needs to look at our penultimate degree. The secret lesson we're being taught is that we all will become zombies at some point. We'd better



get used to it.

Zombies can move; however, they can be depicted as moving fast or very slow. The next time you're in the lodge, either for a business meeting or a degree, observe the floor work of the participants. You will see slow, methodical movements. Then watch the difference in the speed at which we leave the lodge at the end of a long business meeting or to get food before or after a degree. You will observe the average Freemason moving at speeds that Usain Bolt could only dream of.

Zombies are in a state of decay. Think about the ritual in the degree mentioned above. The body of Hiram Abiff was in a state of high putrefaction when discovered. Imagine how he must have looked when raised (FROM THE DEAD...INSERT OMINOUS MUSIC HERE). We're taught in Freemasonry to care about the internal qualifications of a man and not the external. This is obviously because when we come back to life, there's a good chance that we're not going to look or smell so good.

Zombies have unending hunger. Do I really have to say it? Zombies like to eat. Freemasons like to eat. Our meals, table lodges, and festive boards train us as Freemasons to have an eternal hunger for human flesh when we become zombies.

Zombies are usually portrayed as clumsy. When was the last time you went to a degree where everything went perfectly? There's generally at least some awkwardness caused by misspoken or forgotten ritual or a misstep in the floor work. Freemasons can make a



mistake here or there and brush it off and continue the ritual. This is preparing us for the inevitability that most of us will be shambling mounds of flesh. Sure, we'll have a few more akin to Bub from George A. Romero's "Day of the Dead." but that will be the exception rather than the rule.

Zombies are vulnerable to the destruction of the brain but are unaffected by other injuries. One of the most important lessons taught in the second section of the Third Degree is what wounds we can sustain and which will kill us when we are zombies. How is Hiram assaulted? He's able to survive the first few attacks. It's the one that final strike and where it's placed that does him in.

Zombies are individually pretty easy to kill. However, in a group, they are powerful. Because of this, zombies are focused on trying to keep up their zombie membership numbers by making other zombies. Not only that, other smaller zombie groups branch out from the main herd. The parallel to Freemasonry is uncanny.

Zombies never attack other zombies. It's almost like the zombies have taken some sort of obligation not to harm other zombies. Why does that ring a bell?

Zombies are industrious. They work together towards a common goal of the destruction of humanity. Are we not as Freemasons taught about this? That we should also be industrious, or else be a useless drone of nature?

Still not convinced, my Brethren? Let me draw your attention to this article which tells the tale of how the most famous American Freemason, George Washington, almost became a zombie. From the io9 website: (<https://tinyurl.com/washingtonzombie>)

"George Washington may have been America's first president, but was he nearly America's first zombie-in-chief? If William Thornton, physician and designer of the US Capitol, had had his way, Washington's body would have been subjected to a scientific experiment designed to bring the deceased former president back to life.

In December 1799, 67-year-old George Washington took a ride through the wet winter rain and, shortly afterward, developed a fever and a sore throat. When his condition became so bad that Washington could no longer swallow the concoctions of vine-

gar, molasses, and butter with which he was trying to treat himself, Washington called in his livestock and slave overseer, who drained three-quarters of a pint of blood from the ailing man. When bleeding failed to have the desired effect, three physicians were called in, all of whom recommended emetics and — you guessed it — more blood to be drawn. Over the brief course of his treatment, Washington's stomach and bowels were repeatedly evacuated and the puncture-happy docs took nearly two and a half liters of blood. Just two days after that fateful morning ride, Washington closed his eyes for the final time, after telling his doctors, "I die hard, but I am not afraid to go."

But Washington's body was not buried immediately after his death. The president may not have feared death, but he did fear being buried alive. Before he died, he commanded his secretary, Tobias Lear, to ensure he would not be entombed less than three days after he died. In accordance with Washington's wishes, his body was put on ice until it could be moved to the family vault.

That's where the story gets a little strange. The morning after Washington died, his step-granddaughter Elizabeth Law arrived with a family friend, William Thornton. History best remembers Thornton as the architect who created the original design for the Capitol building, but he was also a trained physician, having studied at the University of Edinburgh. Although he did not practice medicine for much of his life, Thornton always had a keen interest in the workings of the human body. He suggested a novel method for resurrecting the fallen warrior. Thornton told Washington's wife Martha that he wanted to thaw Washington's body by the fire and have it rubbed vigorously with blankets. Then he planned to perform a tracheotomy to insert a bellows into Washington's throat and pump his lungs full of air, and finally to give Washington an infusion of lamb's blood. Friends and family declined Thornton's mad scientist offer, not because they thought his solution impossible, but because they felt the nation's first president should rest in peace.

So what gave Thornton the idea to play Dr. Frankenstein? Susan E. Lederer, author of the book *Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion in Twentieth-Century America*, notes that many physicians in the late 18th Century believed that lamb's blood had unique properties, and believes Thornton meant to give Washington's circulatory system "a

spark of vitality” that might jolt him back to life. But Paul Schmidt, in his article “Forgotten transfusion history: John Leacock of Barbados,” published in the British Medical Journal, suggests that the University of Edinburgh may have been at the forefront of transfusion research (unless you count all those transfusion experiments in 17th-Century France).

Thornton wasn’t the only Edinburgh alum thinking about blood transfusions during that time period. Philip Syng Physick, an earlier Edinburgh grad (who incidentally practiced in Philadelphia, where Thornton himself briefly practiced medicine), is reported to have performed a human blood transfusion as early as 1795. John Leacock, a later graduate, performed successful transfusion experiments, believing an infusion of blood would “excite” the recipient’s heart. Leacock’s experiments, in turn, influenced James Blundell, who is credited with introducing the process to the mainstream medical community. Schmidt wonders if the Edinburgh community took particular interest in those early French transfusion experiments, planting the idea in Thornton’s mind.

Oddly, reanimation wasn’t Thornton’s only thwarted plan for Washington’s body. Thornton secretly included a burial vault in his designs for the Capitol, hoping it would be Washington’s final resting place. After Washington’s coffin was placed in the family vault, Martha did agree that he could be later removed to the Capitol because her body could join his when she died. Alas, the transfer of burial chambers, like zombie Washington himself, was not meant to be.

I believe that George Washington instructed his secretary not to entomb his body until three days had passed because he knew full well that he would return as a zombie. Unfortunately, he didn’t pay attention to our degrees. Hiram Abiff was raised after being dead for 15 days. For whatever reason, that’s the amount of time we, as Freemasons, will remain dead before re-animating. Thornton’s attempts to re-animate our beloved first president were just a clever cover-up to explain why Washington would have returned from the dead. Unfortunately, it wasn’t meant to be. I suspect that what Thornton did was prevent George from re-animating.

I hope that my satire was well received. What is clear, however, is how one can take some of our

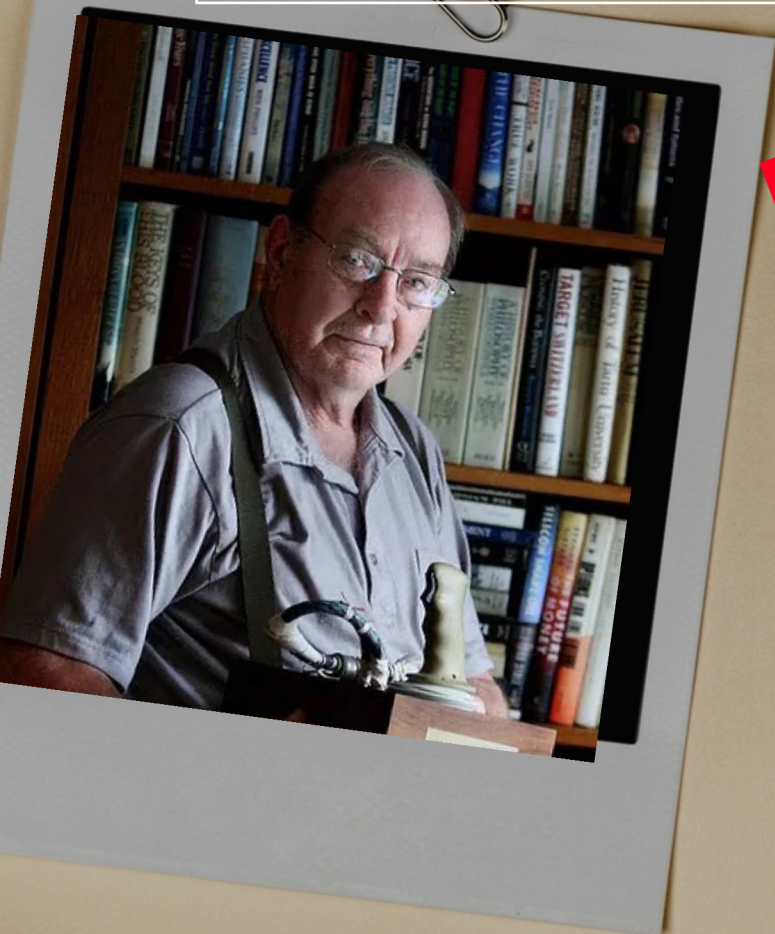
rituals and apply them for nefarious purposes with a bit of imagination. One just needs to go to YouTube and type in “Freemason conspiracies” to get a full dose of this. You’ll quickly find out that the Freemasons are responsible for not only plotting to take over the world and institute a one-world government but also for faking the moon landing (Freemasons control NASA), waging war on Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, controlling Hollywood, worshipping Satan, being in league with the Illuminati (some of whom are Reptilian Shape-Shifting Aliens), and suppressing the “truth” that the earth is flat. I’m sure I’m missing some. I can only wish the Freemasons were so cool. Seriously. If we were responsible for all of these things, we would have an active and engaged membership. I think that what many YouTube conspiracy theorists fail to realize is just how dire our situation is. In the past six months, I have been to two meetings that couldn’t make a quorum. If we can’t get Freemasons to come out to meetings, how in the heck would we be able to do any of the things they accuse us of doing?

Quite frankly, when I wrote above that zombies are in a decaying state, the tie to Freemasonry is obvious. Freemasonry as a whole is in a decaying state. We’re fighting a declining membership due to the attrition of members dying and the inability to bring new members in. When we can bring in new members, we have difficulty retaining or engaging them. Existing active members see apathy all around and slowly start to succumb to it as well. Yes, we can still guard the West Gate, but we need to allow at least more people to approach it. My brothers, we can do better, and we must do better. If we don’t do something radical soon, the trend of the continuing decline of membership will continue until Freemasonry is dead. I fear that once that happens, unlike the zombie, we won’t be able to raise it from its grave.



# The Curious Case of Bro. Edgar Mitchell

by RWB.: Robert H. Johnson, Committee on Maosnic Education



**DECLASSIFIED**

*Mauro Highlands region, making him the sixth person to walk on the Moon. The legacy of his post-NA-SA scientific work is carried on through the Institute of Noetic Sciences.”*

It's always a curious thing for me when I see someone of such stature, someone who is an authority, take an active interest in things most people think are a little “out there.” What defines “out there”? Well, for most, it's things like ghosts, UFOs, Metaphysics, and more. A curious position for sure when we consider what is “normal” in religious beliefs the world over...I digress.

I suppose I am an “out there” kind of person. When I conversed with my friend over the weekend, he reminded me of the tales and stories that Edgar Mitchell had confided in him- that Mitchell had had an out-of-body experience while riding back to Earth and his visions of the Sacred Samadhi.

It sent my mind reeling with questions, questions I did have answered but will remain with me due to their sensitive nature of them. What I wanted to drive home with this post was the curious nature of those men who are on top of the world, both literally and figuratively, and who believe in things differently.

James Irwin was another Apollo Astronaut who

In my travels, I meet some amazing Brothers. Men with insane, almost unbelievable stories...except they are real. Recently this was the case when I spent the weekend with a Brother who was great friends with Brother Edgar Mitchel. For those who do not know, Bro. Mitchell was an Apollo Astronaut. His Wiki summary is worth posting below:

*“Edgar Dean “Ed” Mitchell (September 17, 1930 – February 4, 2016) was a United States Navy officer, aviator, test pilot, aeronautical engineer, ufologist, and NASA astronaut. As the Lunar Module Pilot of Apollo 14, he spent nine hours working on the lunar surface in the Fra*

had a curious fascination. He was aboard Apollo 15, and his life's work after returning home was to prove and find the literal Noah's Ark. He climbed Mount Ararat several times and almost died.

Many cases of Astronauts believing in and taking positions on the strange and unusual make the general public do a double take. However, Edgar Mitchell was a bit more scientific in his endeavors than others. You may have noticed at the end of the Wiki summary that Brother Edgar formed the Institute of Noetic Sciences. If that sounds familiar, you've likely read the book, *The Lost Symbol* by Dan Brown.

The word "Noetic" refers to the "...theory in philosophy, as a branch of metaphysical philosophy concerned with the study of the mind and intellect. There are also references to the science of noetics, which cover the field of thinking and knowing, thought and knowledge, as well as mental operations, processes, states, and products through the data of the written word."

I don't know about you, but this sounds an awful lot like the Masonic practices...divesting our hearts and minds...Doing actual internal work on our characters and egos etc. Pretty curious indeed...

The actual Institutes description, which deals with a little more than just the basic description of what "Noetics" is, is as follows:

*"The Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS) is an American non-profit parapsychological research institute. It was co-founded in 1973 by former astronaut Edgar Mitchell, along with investor Paul N. Temple, and others interested in purported paranormal phenomena, in order to encourage and conduct research on the noetic theory and human potential.*

*The Institute conducts research on topics such as spontaneous remission, meditation, consciousness, alternative healing practices, consciousness-based healthcare, spirituality, human potential, psychic abilities, psychokinesis, and survival of consciousness after bodily death. The Institute maintains a free database, available on the Internet, with citations to more than 6,500 articles about whether physical and mental health benefits might be connected to meditation and yoga.*

*Headquartered outside Petaluma, California, the IONS is situated on a 200-acre (81 ha) campus that includes offices, a research laboratory, and a retreat*

*center (originally the campus of World College West). Its current director is Cassandra Vieten. Other researchers associated with it include Dean Radin and Rupert Sheldrake.*

I find these things fascinating because I believe in the inseparable union of Science and Religion or Spirituality. I find them to be interdependent. It's the central area of my studies. To know that men like Bro. Mitchell had invested the time and money into studying these things sure is a bit reassuring, not that I need it, but it's a small comfort.



Most Worshipful Grand Master, Wardens and Brothers all:

“How beautiful upon the mountains,” saith our ancient Grand Master,” are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that publisheth peace.”

Peace, which from the beginning has been so unknown on Earth that man can scarcely form a conception of her beauties. Peace, which has been seen but in glimpses on her passing, in the solitude of the wise and good, but whose presence amid the throng and turbulence of life has been only known to the dream of the poet and the hope of the enthusiast. Peace, whose homo is in a higher degree of life than man's, is of such heavenly excellence that even the feet of her messenger, seen in holy vision, were sandaled with beauty to the lofty and benevolent spirit of Isaiah.

And well may Peace be beautiful, for she is the twin sister of Harmony and Beauty, and these two, in Masonic language, are the same. Peace dwelt between the four rivers of the garden before confusion drove forth the happy inmates, beneath the sword of the cherub, which still turning every way, defends the entrance of life and light, that none may return but those who are worthy and well qualified, and have permission.

Peace was with the Supreme Architect when he laid the foundations of the world in wisdom, and set up its pillars in strength. And so, also, when the work of our ancient Grand Master was wrought in like manner, without the sound of offensive or defensive metal, in all its parts, that the work which was designed in wisdom and established in strength, might be perfected in beauty.

In contrast with her smile, Confusion and Discord display all the horrors of their dragon forms--their work is war--at times bloodshed and destruction--at times vexation, strife, and rancor among members of one brotherhood; but it is always war where peace is not, for they two walk round and divide between them the whole circle of duration.

Peace is of the holy influences of the tabernacle, with its sacred treasures. War is of the confusion and sin of Babel. War destroys; Peace builds up. War comes with the clangor of drum and trumpet, and the clash of murderous engines; Peace comes with the voice of flute and tabor, and the echos of the Sabbath bell. War wields the flashing sabre, stained with gore; Peace turns the glittering plowshare on the furrowed field.

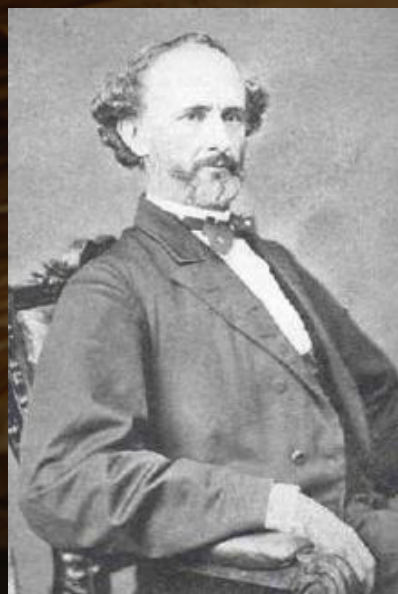
# FROM THE ARCHIVES

*\*From the Editor\**

*This touching oration given by famed Illinois Brother and esoteric adept, H.P. Bromwell, is a testament to the concerns and works of the Grand Lodge of Illinois. This oration was given at the 1861 Grand Lodge Annual Communication and would have been read in full to the Brothers present. It is poetic and beautiful, and understandable for the modern Freemason.*

*This particular speech references the turmoil and strife of the United States, as we had just entered into our own greatest trial--the Civil War. Brother against Brother, kindred spirits entangled, the human race pit against not itself but the deep and despotic specter of slavery under the guise of "state's rights."*

*Make no mistake that our Brothers stood against the confederacy in the majority. Further, it's to the illuminated Brothers, like Bromwell, who inspired the best in Freemasons to live what we preach, to walk under the influence of the working tools. I hope you enjoy this excerpt from the 1861 Grand Lodge Proceedings. The oration is printed in full, and I recommend reading it in its entirety.*



War fills the Earth with blood, and marshals hellish passions to rage and shatter and devour; Peace descending, sows the Earth with gold and flowers and corn, and calls the gentle affections to twine about all souls their garlands of delight. She is the almoner of blessings, whichever increase and multiply around her votaries; her messengers have the odors of Paradise upon their garments, and the brightness of Zion is their crown. Where she comes, brethren dwell together in unity, and her breath is as the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, and as the dew which descended upon the mountains of the Lord.

Would to God, Master, Wardens, and Brothers, that I were today, to you, a messenger of peace in all things, bringing tidings of peace throughout our borders, and the world. But this may not be. The world is still torn by the wrestlings of discordant passions, treachery, folly, and ambition, those destroyers of nations, still rage among us.

The land in which we dwell, whose strength and harmony were the admiration of the world, has become the arena of the most terrible and gigantic war of modern ages. We are roused from our labors in the chambers of the temple by an alarm more terrific and ominous than that of old, when the ponderous engines of Nebuchadnezzar were thundering against the battlements of Jerusalem.

A war is on us and about us, such as our fathers have never witnessed. A war between a kindred race--the dwellers by the same rivers, whose fathers wrought together in a league of patriotism and a brotherhood of arms--whose graveyards are filled with the mingled tombs of sirs whose sons now ravin for each other's blood.

A war whose legions, as the sand for multitude, are marshaled in lines of a thousand leagues; and whose rival banners blaze across a continent; and whose clash of arms rises on every moment, on every wind that blows through a quarter of the civilized world.

Devastation and death are sweeping the fairest regions of our country, and destruction rides on the midnight blaze of consuming cities, and the shock of battles thunders from a thousand fields.

I wish not to dwell on this war or its horrors; I would not have introduced them here but for the solemn and stupendous facts which stare us in the face, and

force upon our sight the terrible dangers to which society is now exposed and because there is not a Lodge from which we are assembled, but has some member of its band within the fearful circle of fire and blood, from which how few we know not may return.

Of those who last sat in this fraternal body, some are in the midst of battle, and some are now lying low upon the level of death; and around every altar within our limits are some anxious hearts and brimming eyes, that must throb and watch in vain for the returning footstep of a brother or a son.

How could I be silent about that on which every heart about me is dwelling. How should I hold my peace, when death, the great leveler, is sweeping down our brothers and friends with tenfold rapid strokes of his trenchant blade, and the voice of mourning in about all our homes?

Yet even without this unusual work of death, would he many painful associations - memories of the departed--clustering around us, at this meeting, in this place.

We should miss the forms of some who once lent pleasure and dignity to our counsels in former days. They have gone-- some with locks grown hoary in the ways of righteousness and truth, and some in the bloom of younger manhood, e'er time had warned them that the silent messenger from the land of shadows was at the outer door. They are ever passing before us, yet solemn as is the thought, it is still more solemn to think that there are some about us whom we must pass before.

They have gone; some who were high in honor among us - the beloved, and

“The sun shall rise, shall stand, shall fall,  
But these shall stand no more;  
No more the faithful Craft shall call,  
Or scan their labors o'er.”

And we say amen, “The will of God is accomplished, so mote it be.”

Yet, Master and Brothers, notwithstanding the tumult of the nations, it is a pleasant thought that, in some measure, we meet today as messengers of peace. For her home, of right, is in the mystic East, and her walk among the burning tapers.

The tesselled floor was laid for her footsteps, and be-

tween the pillars of the porch is the way of her going. Since that period which lies beyond recorded years, when the first Masonic Lodge set up its great pillars, and displayed its ornaments and jewels, Peace and Harmony have been not only welcome in our Lodges, but so necessary, that without their presence, no Masonic work could be begun or completed.

Because of these and other principles of Masonic philosophy, Masonry has seen the beginning and the ending of all human institutions, which have passed away, and today we are on the same soil where states have risen and decayed upon the sepulchers of those still wore ancient, the Lodges of Ancient Craft Masonry rear their greater and lesser lights, and set up their altars in the name of Jehovah.

Even amid the clash of arms in our own country, Masonry sits serene, content, while she cannot prevent the dreadful calamities of war, to open on her ten thousand altars the great lights of her sublime mysteries, and counteract as far as possible the baleful influences of evil passions, by the teachings of word and symbol, to which every Mason must give heed.

From the influences of the Lodge room, how much we know not, may the horrors and cruelties of war be mitigated. We only know that such a brotherhood, embracing almost as many members as the rival armies of the war, of the better and more reflecting minds, and constantly reminded of the benevolent principles and pure teachings of our Craft, cannot be without influence on the councils of the belligerents, civil as well as military.

Therefore, instead of grieving that this great calamity has come upon us and the world, in spite of all the influences Masonry could exert to conduct society to more humane pursuits, and therefore giving up as lost all the watchings and labors of the past, we have cause to rejoice in this at least, that, in the event of so fearful a convulsion, Masonry has already attained such a growth and influence to be exerted in mitigation of the evil. And after all, the picture of turbulence and wrong which we witness today, is but the passing scene of the great tragedy which has been going forward through the ages of man's existence. A glance at the revolving spectacle of crime, which the eyes of all generations have witnessed in turn before us. What has been the work of Discord from the beginning? What an exhibition of pride, hatred, envy, deceit, pillage, murder, oppression, idolatry, and blasphemy, docs it not present?

Peoples and nations and tribes, kingdoms and churches, warring and persecuting and tormenting. Now trampling in pride on human rights, now ground in the dust of tyranny's chariot wheels, now seething in the crucible of revolution. Has it not been always and everywhere the same, in Jewish, in Christian, and in Heathen lands? The dungeon, the rack, and the scaffold disfiguring every scene of human occupancy, to devour the hapless wretches whom even war's unceasing carnage would have spared. Every agency of malevolence and impiety let loose, to render Earth to Earth. With such a history, what better could we expect of the world than what we see? With such surroundings, I wonder not that all good influences have achieved so little, but that aught of God remains.

I wonder not that priest and prophet and apostle have sent down to us their words of wailing, that the winds wander moaning an unconsenting miserere, and the waters are chiming a perpetual dirge. I wonder not that Earth, grown weary of man, should open her mouth to destroy him that she sends forth the earthquake and the whirlwind, to heave his abiding places to destruction and overthrow the refuge of his sin.

I wonder not, O Ocean, that thou dost summon all thy waves to lash the frightened shore--to sweep away his works and blot out his remembrance. I wonder not, O ye Mountains, that ye wore reared so high--that ye stand peering through your misty curtains upon the purer air and frigid light. For on your summits may weary passing spirits of mercy alight and weep not; for they alone have never born witness to man's crimes, nor echoed to his groan. Yet amid all the misery and crime of Earth, Earth influences for good have struggled against the forces of evil; and at times, it has seemed that a better day was breaking on the world; so that in every age men have not ceased to look forward to a near approach of the period when the meek should inherit the Earth, Earth when the lion and the lamb should lie down together, as prefigured in the badge and token of a Mason.

Let us then consider for a moment the interest we have in coming together at this time. What came we here to do? Whence have we come? We are a handful of the Craft dispersed about the Earth; Earth's duty it has become to meet for counsel and action in the preservation of our honored institution--a duty we share with some forty like bodies in our own country, and a far greater number of various jurisdictions

here and throughout the world. We have come from the various pursuits of life, and we meet both old and young. The old, that they may impart wisdom and dignity to our assembly, and because they have gone in and out before us, with honor to themselves and profit to the Craft, until they would rather be as doorkeepers in the house of benevolence than to stay in the tents of ease. The young, that we may make further proficiency in the knowledge of the Craft, and gain title to the respect of those who will be our juniors in after years, by doing honor, as becomes us, to our elders.

We meet both rich and poor, for Masonry regardeth neither poverty nor riches, which are the mere circumstances and not qualities of any; and as in life these things should not be regarded, so on the checkered floor they are entitled to no consideration. We meet to clasp the hand of friendship, to behold the dignity and honor of our ancient house, to give counsel to all in their labors, whether it be task or journey, and to strengthen the hands of the Craftsmen who, for their skill and assiduity, may be put as overseers of the work.

Our ancient brothers wrought both in operative and speculative Masonry; the works of their hands corresponded, in beauty of design and excellence of workmanship, to the mystic Temple of Wisdom and Virtue which they represented. But the former have passed away, and the latter stands. The former have perished by the ravages of time, which has no hold upon the other, for it is eternal.

The towering structure of Babel lies beneath the sod of centuries. The stupendous temples of the Nile and Ludus live only in their marred and shattered fragments, to tell how human glories perish. The temples of the sun, which shone on Persia and Peru, though thousands of years may have intervened between the laying of their cornerstones, are silent as the sepulchers of Idumean. The palaces of Nineveh and Tyre, the splendid creations of Grecian and Roman art, have yielded to the tempests of years and the more destroying hand of man.

The Temple of our ancient Grand Masters, the most perfect and magnificent of structures, such as Earth hath seen but once, hath no stone left upon another. Where the gorgeous gates blazed in the sunlight of the Feast of Palms, neither Jew nor Christian, dare set his forbidden foot, but the Mosque of those who were last in filling up the cup of Jerusalem's tribula-

tion, which multiplied centuries have pressed to her lips undrained, lifts its scorning and defiant minarets to the skies of Moriah, and the fugitive and trembling Hebrew walks in the twilight to weep upon the fragments of the Dionysian builders, in the valley once spanned by the arches of Solomon. For they who build of the crumbling and perishable things of Earth, Earth build but things that perish; and the silver and the gold, the marble and the precious stones, olive wood, and the cedar, and the beauty and the glory which is on them and of them, must mingle with the dust of revolving production and decay; while the art and knowledge, which wrought out their perfection, will live on, to garnish other fields with new creations of beauty and magnificence, that the ceaseless labor of man may still be directed in feeble imitation of the works of the Eternal.

But not so with the glorious structure of symbolic philosophy called Masonry—a term which, however, derived, has been used as synonymous with geometry and light, for the reason that geometry is the noblest of sciences, and admits of no falsehood, and hence is used as the medium of light, which is truth.

The Masonic temple, being fashioned after the divine plan, still stands upon its great supports, while the ebb and flow of life and action go on through the sweep of generations; and today the Craftsmen go in and out, and find the ground floor still as firm, and the jewels as untarnished, the ornaments as perfect, and the lights as pure, as when the servants of Solomon and Hiram rejoiced with the assembled Kings of the East, at the carrying up of the cap-stone.

Within her courts is the home of every science, and the throne of every virtue. The sciences which once were to be found only within the veil of her adytum, have long since gone forth to enlighten the world, which, nevertheless, still wonders at the existence, and inquires for the objects, of Masonry, and looks with jealousy and distrust at its duration and expansion.

Many of those who hold our sacred writings, which are the written part of Masonry, and who stand ne lights and guides to the multitudes, upon the fair pathway of religion, look with aversion and even contempt upon an institution they do not wish to understand; some of them even enter the pulpit, with the Bible as authority, to inveigh against us. But Masonry has not gone out to meet them on the field of controversy, for the reason that her advocates are taught that it is not by useless disputations with the



uninformed that the character of Masonry is to be vindicated. Nevertheless, at proper times, it is permitted to utter such truths as may correct the errors of honest opposition in those whose friendship and regard might be desirable.

When such, ask us where is your creed? we answer, our creed was furnished us by the pen of inspiration. If they say it is not specific, and that we may believe anything under it, we answer, it is as the maker thought proper to write, will you blame him also? If they say, you admit the Jew and the Indian to your Lodge, we answer, that he who made the great Lodge of the world, made us also, some Jews and some Indians, some of all nations under heaven. If they say, you have secrets among you, we answer, that we are not so secret as the Almighty, and those we have we received as such, and the holy writings say that he that keepeth secrets is wise, but he that revealeth secrets shall be sawn asunder.

And if they open the sacred volume to condemn us, we say, if we Masons had not preserved our Bible, of old, where would now your Bible be? After all, permit me to say to such, do ye well to be angry? What do ye teach yourselves?

Do you enjoin a better maxim than to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before the Lord? Do you speak a language more truthful than geometry, or more honorable than the symbols of Moses and Elijah? Do you teach a better righteousness of conduct than to walk erect before God and man, by the plumb line of Ezekiel? A better justice than to square your actions by the square of Virtue? A better humility than that « he that humbleth himself shall be exalted?» A firmer faith than trust in God? A surer hope than in the Lion of the tribe of Judah, or a wider charity than love to God and man? Is it not enough that you teach and we also? Is not the world in need of all good influences? There should be no war between us. Why should not all who have at heart the welfare of the race, join with us in promoting the peace and union of the world? We would not repel their fraternal efforts. We would not say, stand by thyself; I am holier than thou; but we would greet them with the old Masonic salutation, which is Health, Union, and Peace. But whatever the enemies or opposers of Masonry may say or do, the light of true knowledge is burning and will burn within the open portals of the Lodge, and freedom of thought and conscience are guaranteed to all who pass the threshold.

Science, which is light, belongs to the Fellow-Craft, yet not everything which lies within his reach does he make his own. There are some who still are content with being bearers of burdens, or loitering away their days about the outer courts, who do not know the symmetry and beauty of the upper chambers, because they will not be at the pains of climbing the steps of knowledge which conduct them thither.

But the true Mason is one who seeks for knowledge in all directions that may present an opening for his advance--not only in the tyled Lodge room, but wherever human thought may find an object for its reflection.

For Masonry and philosophy walk hand in hand, and their way is progress. Not the blind and battling philosophy which the atheist has wrought out of the prejudices and error of wrangling disputants, who have gone before, but the philosophy whose voice is concordant with that of the first great light, whose teaching are wisdom.

Without these, his course is one of labyrinthine paths, whichever return upon themselves, or are lost in mazes amid darkness. Without these, it is true, he may go out as thousands have vainly done, and commune with the heavens above, and with the Earth beneath, and with the realms of air, all full of wonders. It may read in the language of the outspread scrolls of night, the dim and awful lesson of infinity and power in the first great cause. He may hear the voice of wind and wave, chanting an eternal age to some higher and mightier mind. He may dive to the depths of oceans, and penetrate the solid Earth, holding converse with the voices that speak from the sepulchers of former life; in the depths of the valleys and the dark bowels of the mountains, appealing to rocks and winds and wares to render to him their mysteries. He may seek to solve the problem of himself, his duty and his destiny, and the darker secret of the self-existent.

And this search after the knowledge of itself, and of its cause, in the heavens above and in the Earth beneath, he may call the first philosophy. But as it begins in confusion, so it ends in despair. But when he returns to the Masonic temple, behold there is written on its archway "Holiness to the Lord," and upon its altars shine, in light that grows not dim, the words of wisdom, which say "this is wisdom the fear of the Lord, and to depart from iniquity is understanding." Guided by this wisdom he may approach the source of light, ever advancing by upright steps on new degrees of knowledge; for in all

things of light which the Creator has thought proper to be communicated to man, there is progress by degrees. The mind, at first enshrouded by ignorance, grope in darkness, which obscures the form and beauty of all which is presented to its vision; but when light has been added to light, until the true characters of many things appear, and half-revealed beauties shine in those beyond, the observer would hasten with impatience to further discoveries of truth.

He is like a wanderer upon mountains, guided by a flickering torchlight, before the break of day. Passing beneath the spreading oak, he perceives only the gnarled and uncouth form of the sturdy trunk. He gropes through the corpse and sees only the trailing vines which impede his step, and the thorns which torment his flesh.

He meets the impending rock, but sees only the broken outline of a huge and sombre mass, whose dismal caverns yawn as ghostly sepulchers. He hear the wind in the gloomy forest, but its sounds are as the wailing of unhappy spirits, auguring of coming woe.

But behold! the torch of morn is kindling at the East, and the gates of hyacinth are turning on their opal hinges. The halo of the coming day is floating on the hills, growing brighter and brighter on the burnished skies. He looks back upon his path, and behold the oak stands towering, a majestic monarch of the forest, shaking tinted drops from his spangled boughs.

The vines weave canopies of emerald and scarlet and gold for the dwelling of the brilliant oriole. 'The thorns are but the climbing roses, and the rock looms up a battlement of porphyry, its base is laved by crystal fountains, its cares are garnished with the thousand forms of glittering stalactites, its brow is crowned with laurel. The dark abyss is opening beneath the silver mist, and behold, a valley, spread with blossomed meadows. The wind has now the voice of the sweet southwest, breathing of field of spikenard and hills redolent of odors. Where all was drear and cheerless, all is beauty and delight. But again, as the sun rises through the mists, a brighter scene appears--the light, refracted by impalpable vapors, produces that strange phenomenon, the mirage. It sees the most distant hills brought up before him; they stand with their rocks, their towers, their fountains, suspended in the marble air. The far-off mountains swell upon the clouds, and spread their pines and glaciers to his enraptured gaze. It sees the eagle's nest upon the granite cliff, and still beyond, spread plains and fields and villages, and azure lakes, thrown

perpendicular with all their waves. Proud navies ride, and portly argosies, inverted, spread their sails upon the sky above. Bright cities rise from the deep waters, with spires and bulwarks, and above them colossal forms are striding on the air. Armies and banners pass, and tented fields, and tall cathedrals rest on the tops of forests or swing from upturned vineyards.

The wanderer holds his breath in rapture, and hurries that he may bring others to behold the wondrous scene. But, long ere he returns, the mists are dissipated by the solar blaze, and but the real landscape now appears. The wanderer returns, but no distorted imagery greets his expectant eyes. The scene which first appeared so lovely, truly appears, but this has lost its charm. He sees no grandeur in the oak, no beauty in the bursting jewels of the jasmine. There is no smile in the valley, no music on the breeze. In disappointment, he retires, not knowing how much he saw was real and how much delusion.

So, often, with the seeker after wisdom. It seeks by a feeble light--the path is sad and irksome. Light breaks upon him, and he sees with rapture. But the false medium of imagination intervenes, and her phantom forms rise in distorted likeness of the truth. A thousand things, which have no more substance than vapor, are blended with those whose muse is truth. A further light may dispel the illusion, but it often leaves his mind oppressed with doubts, a prey to disappointment.

Thus in the search for knowledge, even with the true light about us, deception and error are on every band. If even the appearances of those natural objects, which are perceptible to the physical senses, are so often but deception, what must those expect who venture upon the wilderness of abstract and even metaphysical ideas? And why should it be strange that the world is filled with every folly, and every shade of doctrine, or that contending functions in science, politics, or religion, should wrestle and fight, and lash each other up and down the world as long as man shall mingle with his fellows. Therefore it is wise, in the pursuit of knowledge, to imitate the conduct of that illustrious teacher and Minster, who, declining the title of Sophist, or wise man, took upon himself the humble name of Philosopher, or lover of wisdom.

I have spoken of these things, Masters, because it is

to avoid the consequences of error and confusion, which mar society, subvert law, destroy nations, and curse the Earth with ignorance, persecution, woe, and death, that Masonry exists; and because you are placed as guides and exemplars to all who are toiling and journeying in the work of your calling. You are to work out the perfection of your Masonic system; not to hope that idle wishes or vain forms will accomplish it. Masonry is a system of labor-its first lessons are patience and perseverance, and that what each enjoys shall be the fruit of his own labor, assiduity, and skill. Its character is not to be built up by ostentatious displays or sounding professions, but by the fruits of its action shall it be judged at last.

There will be no want of opportunity for the proof and approval of your work. There is no want of material, that you should stand idle while others are gathering and fitting the silver, gold, and precious stones, which shall bear their marks on the noblest ornaments of the temple.

The unnumbered bands of the workmen, dispersed about the Earth, will strive to share with you in every labor of benevolence. Your works will be formed and fitted by the instruments of Solomon, and their beauty shall be as the cunning workmanship of Hiram and Tubal. Your journey will be with the illustrious of the Earth, beneath goodly company of the wayfarer who have passed in the grand Masonic procession of all time, which still goes on "to the undiscovered country," entering in by the dim and awful veil.

What a noble host, with its ever-swelling numbers! How glorious are their trappings and the precious things they bear! Kings and Priests and Prophets, Warriors and Shepherds, Artists and Philosophers, through all the unending line. Seth, by his pillars, and Tubal, with the plowshare and stringed instruments. Abraham, walking with Melchizedek, and Moses, with the Tables of the Law. Jephthah, with his wheat sheaves, and David, with his sword and psalm. Jacob, with the stone of foundation, and Solomon, with the capstone. Hiram, with the cunning workmanship, and Zerubbabel, with the holy treasures. Ezekiel, Daniel, Pythagoras, John, Alfred, Godfrey, and the tens of thousands, hailed as most excellent architects.

The symbols of all wisdom blaze along the march; the banners of the tribes of Israel, and the holy

ark; the curtains of the tabernacle, and the veils of the temple; the book of the law and the testimony, and the volumes of the last hallelujahs; the music of Jubal, and the song of Moses; the prayer of Solomon, and the chorus of the Levites, and the shouting of the cap-stones of all temples, rises upon the air.

The cloud-borne Stairs of Bethel rise beneath the blaze of the Shekinah, and the pillars of fire and cloud tower in their awful grandeur, midway of the scene. The Masonic march, ever passing, must still go on; through perils and persecutions, through carnage and captivity, through desolation and death; for the bush of Moses, which is ever burning, is never consumed. Go on then, Masters and Brothers; the world has place for you all. It matters not that you sit in the councils or toil at the cable-tow, or wander as wayfarers of the wilderness. Though you dwell in the depths of the untrodden waste, and never may be cheered by the presence of congregated Masons, nor ever behold the works of their hands. You need no temple of human workmanship, for your Lodge is from the East to the west, and between the north and the south. The same Grand Master who laid your ground floor and spread your star-decked canopy, is there, and it is all his temple. With your trust in him, and your spirit in harmony with every chord of nature, your hope as bright as the symbol of the covenant, you may go forth upon the outspread world with the freedom wherewith a Mason is most free, possessing all. The world shall be your staple, the rock your altar, and your area the bow upon the cloud; the forest your sanctuary-its "birds of gentle beak" be all your choir-the winds your monitors, the clouds the curtains of your tabernacle, the blue spread heavens your dome, the milky scroll of night the charter of the life beyond, and every star a promise.



# EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

**Double Eagle Con 2022 - November 19th**

Details will be forthcoming via Email and Social Media.

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