

Official Publication of The Grand Lodge of Texas

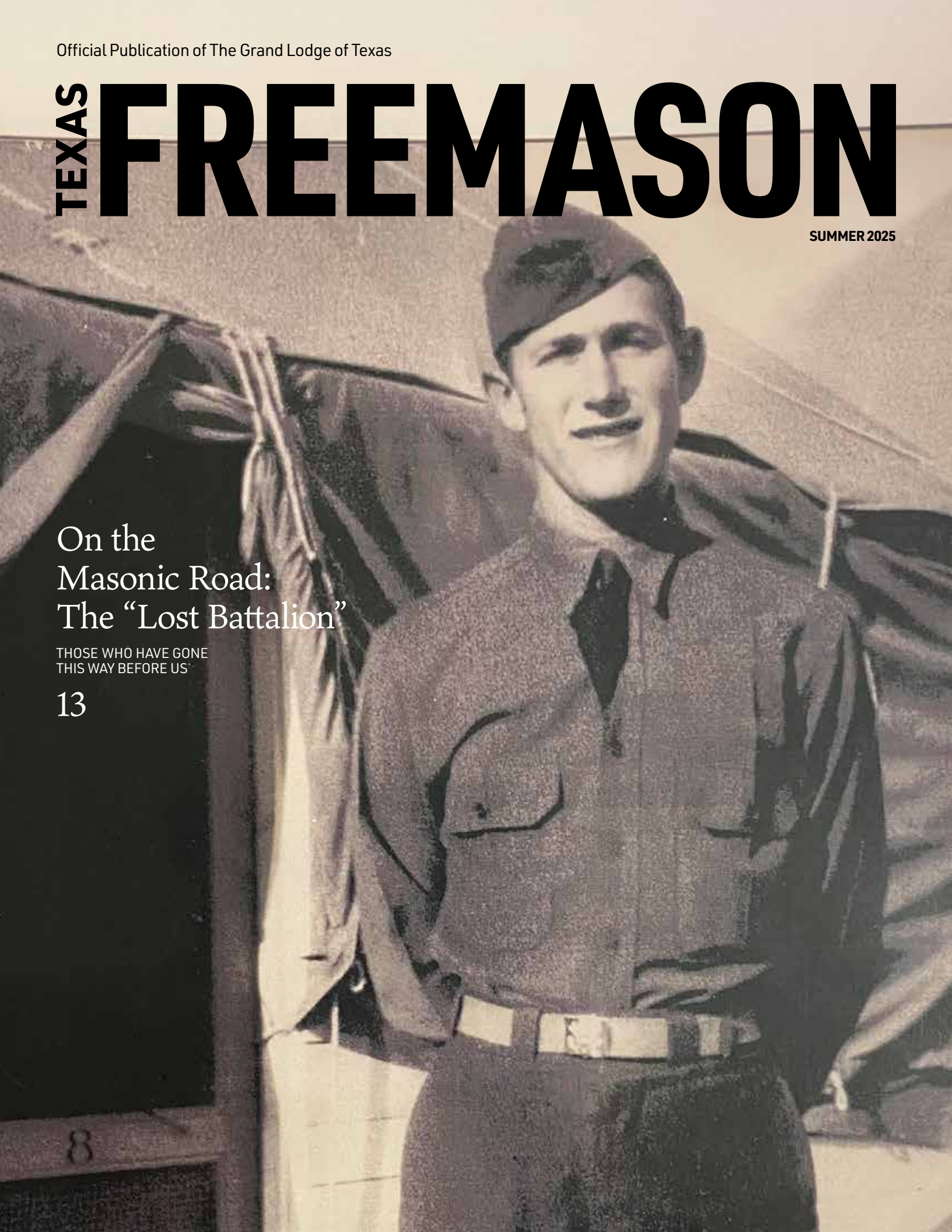
# TEXAS FREEMASON

SUMMER 2025

## On the Masonic Road: The “Lost Battalion”

THOSE WHO HAVE GONE  
THIS WAY BEFORE US

13



# CONTENTS

SUMMER 2025



## Most Worshipful Raborn L. Reader, Jr., Grand Master of Texas Masons enjoying traveling our great State

### GRAND LODGE

- 3 A Word from the Grand Master
- 4 A Word from the Grand Secretary
- 5 2025 Grand Master Activities Thus Far

### FEATURE

- 8 A Tale of Two Texas Masons

### IN EVERY ISSUE

- 11 The Profound Pontifications of Brother John Deacon
- 12 A Look Back

### ACROSS THE STATE

- 13 On the Masonic Road

### EDUCATION & COMMITMENT

- 17 Summer Fund Drive
- 18 The Struggle for the Soul of a Master Mason
- 20 The Plumb Line and the Pitcher's Cleats
- 21 Texas Masonic Retirement Community
- 22 An Unexpected Duty: Andrew Jackson and Lyncoya
- 25 Texas Masonic Charities Foundation

#### ON THE COVER

Clifford L. Johnson, F Battery, 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, captured by the Japanese on March 8, 1942.

## TEXAS FREEMASON

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Please continue to send your articles and Lodge events and news to the Editors of The Texas Freemason Magazine.

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## A WORD FROM THE Grand Master Raborn L. Reader, Jr.



My Brethren All,

Living with integrity while making an impact means aligning your personal values with the tenets and virtues of Freemasonry for the exclusive purpose of creating positive action in the hope of inspiring others to do the same. We should expect to be held accountable for our actions and we should cultivate a culture in which all expect the same. I offer a few ideas on how to approach this on a personal level, professional level, and upon a Masonic level.

1. Define the core values for yourself and your Lodge. Core values guide our culture in actions, operations, and decisions. Ask the question, are they rooted in honesty, respect, accountability? If they are not, shouldn't they be? They should be written down to reflect, contemplate, and discern. How can you utilize them as a personal compass in your daily life? How can your Lodge do the same? Will your selfless actions be recognizable by others?
2. We should lead by example and practice integrity in everyday actions - keep promises, be honest, and take responsibility. Say what you mean and mean what you say. You should inspire others as you model consistency and authenticity. What does a handshake agreement mean to you? What did it mean to your grandfather?

3. Make ethical decisions when faced with tough choices, prioritize integrity over convenience. All we really own is our reputation as defined by others. What do you want to be known for? We should ask: "Would I be proud of this decision in the future?" "Would this embarrass my family?" "How would this be perceived if it made the front page of the newspaper?"

4. We should help others without hidden agendas. Volunteer, mentor (or be mentored), and support causes that align with your values. Do it for the right reason, even if it is not an ideal time for you. Do it without the expectation of receiving a thank you. Give without expecting anything in return.

5. We should stand up for what is right (be just and upright). Speak out against injustice even when it's uncomfortable, and support ethical practices in your community, workplace, and Lodge.

6. Practice self-reflection and regularly assess whether your actions align with your core values. Be honest with yourself, and be open to feedback and willing to grow.

Making an impact with integrity in your professional life means being ethical, accountable, and value-driven while striving for self-success and success for others. The greatest form of leadership is that of a servant leader.

1. Define your professional ethics and identify the values that guide your work (e.g., honesty, fairness, transparency). Ensure your actions align with these principles, even in difficult situations.
2. Lead with accountability and be honest with yourself and accept your mistakes or failures. Learn from them and do not repeat them. Be willing to share your mistakes and what you learned from your mistakes with others for their benefit. I have heard it said before, "do as I say, not as I did." Hold yourself and others to high ethical standards.
3. Build trust and credibility following through on commitments and be reliable. Be honest in your communication, even when delivering difficult news. People may not like what you say, but they will appreciate and respect that you said it. Of course, how you say it is important too!
4. Make ethical decisions under pressure. Prioritize long-term, value-added, sustainable gains over short-term "Wins." The former requires more planning and energy (investment) over the short term, but has much more lasting positive effects. Consider a building without a foundation versus a building founded on sand versus a building founded on rock. Which will be more resilient? If faced with unethical practices or actions,



We should help others without hidden agendas. Volunteer, mentor (or be mentored), and support causes that align with your values.

address them directly or escalate them appropriately (up the organization; not downward).

5. Foster a culture of integrity and encourage open dialogue about ethics in your workplaces and at our lodges. We should support transparency, fairness, and respect in decision-making.
6. Use your influence for positive change and advocate for ethical policies and sustainable practices. Mentor others in integrity-driven leadership.

Making an impact with integrity at the organizational level means embedding ethical principles into the culture, decision-making, and operations of a company or institution (Masonic lodge). So, how can we achieve this?

1. We should establish clear core values by defining and communicating the organization's ethical principles to

ensure leadership exemplifies these values in actions and decisions.

2. We should build a culture of integrity and encourage open discussions about ethics and accountability. Foster psychological safety so Brothers feel comfortable raising concerns.
3. Implement ethical leadership and core values and train leaders to model integrity. We should hold all levels of the organization accountable for ethical behavior, regardless of position.
4. We should ensure transparency in decision-making and communicate our lodge business practices openly with the members of the lodge. We should avoid misleading information about fundraising and reporting back to the lodges.
5. We should develop strong ethical policies and enforcement and establish clear policies on conflicts of interest compliance.

A person's character refers to a system of values, morals and beliefs which shape a person's behavior. Integrity is an aspect of character in which a person adheres to his principles in difficult situations or when no one is looking. If it is our desire to make a positive impact on our society, we must consider how our character and our integrity influence us personally, and how we can leverage each to benefit our Fraternity and our vocations.

Sincerely & Fraternally,

Raborn L. Reader, Jr.  
Grand Master

## A WORD FROM THE Grand Secretary



### Connections in Masonry

Recently, I flew to Washington, D.C. for the wedding of W.✶ Brother Jeremy Barnes, the creator of the Amity App and Grand Marshal for the Grand Lodge of D.C. The flight was filled with anticipation for the fellowship I knew awaited me—Brothers I recognized on the guest list from Texas, California, Florida, Kansas, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, and, of course, the District of Columbia. This one event became a confluence of the many streams of friends I had formed in our Fraternity over the course of several years.

It got me thinking about how our gentle Craft is built on connections, especially through travel. The whole idea of a

“traveling man” is someone who, by moving from place to place and by virtue of this transient existence, meets different people with different ideas and unique traditions along the way.

It’s hard to look back to the small-town kid from West Texas, receiving my Entered Apprentice degree at Trinity Valley Lodge in Dallas, to where I am now. There was no way I could have imagined the profound impact this great Fraternity would have on my life.

I remember traveling with PGM Leonard Harvey to Texas Lodge of Research functions, and later, as a DDGM in 2017 for PGM Kirby, meeting so many friends along the way whom I’d later travel to visit. I truly cannot imagine the course my life would have taken without the guidance of the tenets of our profession and the great men I’ve that have become part of my life through this Fraternity.

Whether it’s joining the Texas delegation in “invading” the Grand Lodge of the Philippines for the first time in recent memory (if not ever), or getting a late-night phone call from Alberta, Canada after the Edmonton Oilers knocked my beloved Dallas Stars out of the Western

Conference Championship—the connections made within the sacred bonds of this Fraternity are ever present.

As it says in our Monitor:

*By the exercise of brotherly love... Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.*

Brotherly love is one of our greatest tenets—but it must be “exercised.” Every time you travel, you’ll find opportunity to practice this principle tenet and connect quickly and deeply with Brothers who have already professed similar beliefs to yours.

If Freemasonry is a microcosm of life—and life is what you make of it, what are you doing as part of the largest, oldest, and most beneficent Fraternity in the world?

Travel well,

Brad S. Billings, PGM  
Grand Secretary



# 2025 GRAND MASTER ACTIVITIES THUS FAR

By Dean Bryant, Staff Writer

## Tuesday, January 28, 2025 Montgomery Lodge No. 25

The Grand Master first Official Visit was very well attended at Montgomery Lodge No. 25. There were twelve Grand Officers, many DDGM's and Master Masons in attendance to enjoy this wonderful evening. Approximately 140 attendees enjoyed the fellowship, an exciting time was had by all. Congratulations to Worshipful Master Brian Bennick, the Officers and Brothers of Montgomery Lodge for a wonderful evening. Our Grand Master is a member of Montgomery Lodge and is currently the Lodge Secretary.



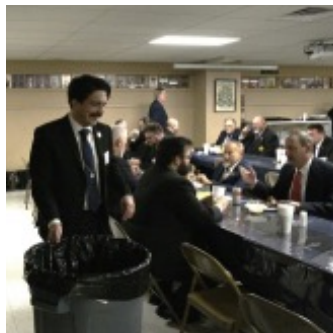
Most Worshipful Grand Master Raborn L. Reader, Jr. addressing the Masons in attendance.



Most Worshipful Grand Master Raborn L. Reader, Jr. with his Grand Officers.



Worshipful Master Brian Bennick beside Most Worshipful Raborn L. Reader, Jr. doing a great job presiding over the events of the evening. Great Job Sir!



Brother Chance Crane, District Communications Officers (DCO) for District 28 assisting with clearing up after the meal, always working hard, and enjoying the evening. Brother Crane hosts regular Zoom meetings for the many DCO's across the State that are much appreciated and well worth a visit.

## Saturday, March 1, 2025 Grand Master Southeast Area Conference

The Grand Master Southeast area Conference, held at Westgate Church in Beaumont was well attended. There were several speakers in attendance that shared information relating to appendant bodies.

### "Streamlining Check-In at Grand Lodge Events: A Modern Approach"

Attending a Grand Lodge event is always an exciting and meaningful experience for Texas Masons. Whether it's the Grand Master's Conference or another significant gathering, every Brother plays a part in strengthening our Fraternity. One of the first steps in ensuring these events run smoothly is the check-in process—a crucial component that not only facilitates organization but also serves as an important archival tool.

### Why the Check-In Process Matters

One of the main reasons we conduct a structured check-in process is to maintain an accurate count of attendees. After each event, a quick tally allows us to assess participation and logistics, helping us improve future gatherings. Additionally, these check-in records serve as a historical reference, much like your own lodge minutes. Should there ever be a need to verify attendance, these records provide a reliable archive.

### Embracing 21st-Century Technology

Traditionally, check-in involves manually verifying membership details, but we are moving into the 21st century with a more efficient system. Today, you'll notice at many Grand Lodge events that we simply scan the bar-code on your dues card. This advancement has significantly streamlined the check-in process, making it faster, more accurate, and more organized. Gone are the days of long waiting times and paper-based tracking—we now have a seamless and modern approach.

### Enhancing Our System with Grandview Integration

Initially, the Grand Lodge employed a straightforward spreadsheet system that captured only a Brother's member ID upon scanning. However, thanks to the efforts of Brother Scott Blackley, P.M., of League City Masonic Lodge, we have enhanced this process by integrating it with Grandview, our membership management

## Most Worshipful Raborn L. Reader, Jr., Grand Master of Texas Masons enjoying traveling our great State.

system. Now, when a Brother checks in, we can immediately retrieve his name and lodge affiliation, ensuring a more personalized and efficient experience.

### The Role of the Check-In Team

If you've ever been assigned to work at the check-in desk at a Grand Lodge event, you know it requires preparation. Volunteers are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes to an hour early to set up laptops, connect scanners, and ensure everything is running smoothly before attendees begin arriving. This behind-the-scenes work is essential for a seamless registration process.

### The Best Seat in the House

Having personally worked at several Grand Lodge events, I can confidently say that the check-in desk offers one of the best experiences. It provides the unique opportunity to meet and greet every Brother in attendance, fostering camaraderie and strengthening our bonds within the Fraternity. Who knows? Perhaps at the next Grand Master's Conference, I'll be the one checking you in!

Brother Mike Mistry, P.M., League City Masonic Lodge No. 1053 A.F. & A.M.

## Thursday, March 6, 2025 League City Lodge No. 1053

On Thursday, March 6, the members of League City Lodge No. 1053 welcomed Most Worshipful Raborn L. Reader, Jr., Grand Master of Texas Masons as he visited his home Lodge. There were many Masons in attendance that enjoyed fellowship with Brothers from many areas across the State.



Brethren enjoying a great meal and wonderful fellowship prior to the meeting.



A big thank you to the Sir Knights of San Felipe de Austin Commandery No. 1 for presenting the flags.

Left to Right - Sir Knights James Agrella, John Knecht, Joe Musick and Jack Burdick, all Past Commanders of San Felipe de Austin Commandery No. 1.



Sir Knight Joe Musick presenting the Texas Flag, and Sir Knight James Agrella presenting the Flag of the United States of America



Worshipful Master Scott Blackley presenting our Grand Master with an awesome picture and plaque, gifts from League City Lodge No. 1053. Wonderful job League City Lodge!

# A TALE OF TWO TEXAS MASONS

By Chuck Clampitt, Mt Etna No. 333, Huntington, IN, Contributing Writer

With the outbreak of the Civil War (War Between the States) in April 1861, the Union devised a strategy named the Anaconda Plan. The plan would entail the blockading of southern ports and gaining control of the Mississippi River, thus cutting off the three western Confederate states of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas. This would subdivide the Confederacy and prevent the shipment of vital foodstuffs east, especially beef. Texas had become a major producer of cattle, and when the state was isolated, consumption of Texas beef plummeted. By war's end the Texas cattle population had increased to an estimated five million head. While on the surface this might appear to be a great asset, the problem was there were no railroads tying cattle producing areas to markets.

Immediately following the war, demand for beef skyrocketed. Large numbers of migrants were headed to mine and homestead west of the Mississippi River. Native Americans were placed on reservations and promised a steady supply of beef. Most importantly, the cities of the east were growing rapidly in size and the population was consuming larger amounts of meat. With all these factors in play, a few enterprising Texans came up with the answer of moving cattle to market. Cattle could be purchased in Texas at \$5 a head and sold for \$40 a head at market. Suddenly the cattle drive of western lore was developed.

In 1866, the first cattle drives were organized, and large herds were moved (herded) northward. The intercontinental railroad was partially completed so cattle from central and eastern Texas were moved via the Shawnee and Chisolm Trails to connecting points of Sedalia, Missouri and Abilene, Kansas, to service eastern markets. Of the four major trails, the best known was the Chisholm. Another famous trail was established further west and was named the Goodnight-Loving Trail. Named for the partnership of Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving, this route moved cattle from San Angelo, Texas, westward into New Mexico Territory and then northward along the Pecos River with Denver

and Cheyenne as destinations. With all such cattle drives, finding cattle in Texas wasn't a problem. Finding good cowboys was. Just like on television and in the movies, cattle herds were large and conditions for the cowboys were brutal. On the first cattle drive Goodnight and Loving, along with eighteen cowboys, herded 2,000 cattle eight hundred miles to Denver at the rate of 15 to 20 miles per day. (Note: The Goodnight-Loving partnership was the historical basis for Larry McMurtry's 1985 novel and made for TV movie *Lonesome Dove*).

On the very first cattle drives, cowboys were expected to take their own food and were limited to whatever they could carry. With the long days plus night watches it left little time for the cowboys to prepare meals. It was then that Charles Goodnight came up with a way to attract the best cowboys to work for him by hiring a cook. Together, he and the cook repurposed an Army surplus Studebaker Wagon (built in South Bend) converting it into the first "Chuck Wagon," which was named after Charlie Goodnight. As can be seen in the photos, built-in storage compartments were added for various staple foods, cooking equipment, and "necessaries" such as repair tools and first aid supplies. Another feature at the back of the wagon was a fold down workspace for food preparation. Other uses for the Chuck wagon were to transport cowboy's camp rolls and personal effects, carry campfire wood in an apron slung under the wagon, and to provide shelter from the rain with a fold out awning. Building the Chuck Wagon was a revolutionary idea and was soon copied for similar applications throughout the west.

The first trail drive of Goodnight-Loving was a huge financial success with the partners returning to Texas with \$12,000 in gold and immediate plans for their second trip. The route the two men chose wasn't by chance since two major elements were a need for water and the avoidance of the Comanche Indians. The Comanches were a fierce warlike tribe that roamed from

Together, he and the cook repurposed an Army surplus Studebaker Wagon (built in South Bend) converting it into the first "Chuck Wagon," which was named after Charlie Goodnight.



Studebaker Chuck Wagon, Courtesy The National Ranching Heritage Center (NRHC) in Lubbock, Texas.



north Texas to southern Kansas. The Goodnight-Loving Trail was specifically chosen to provide adequate water for the cattle and to avoid the Comanches. Unfortunately, the plan didn't work out with the second trail drive.

In September 1867 Oliver Loving and another cowboy went out scouting in front of the herd. In the process Comanches attacked the two men and Loving was wounded in the arm and side and taken to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Here he contracted gangrene, died, and was buried. On his death bed, Loving, asked Goodnight to take his remains back to Texas. "Loving died on Sept. 25, 1867, and his body was kept at Fort Sumner through the winter. In early spring, Goodnight with Loving's son began the six hundred miles to Weatherford (Texas). Oliver Loving's body was reinterred on March 4, 1868. He was 55 years old. Loving County is named in his honor." (Loving & Ikard: Weatherford area historical citizens - Weatherford Democrat, Feb 16, 2019)

Goodnight and Loving were not just financial partners, they were lifelong friends, and fellow Masons both being members of Phoenix Lodge No. 275 in Weatherford. If you view Oliver Loving's tombstone, you can see the Masonic square and compass prominently displayed (see Find-A-Grave on the internet). Goodnight would cowboy on until 1929 when he died at age 93. A lifelong man adventurer, he had been a Texas Ranger, served in the Confederate Army, and spent a lifetime as a cattleman. He is buried in Goodnight, Texas, just east of Amarillo.



## The Karaoke King, Being Made or Becoming

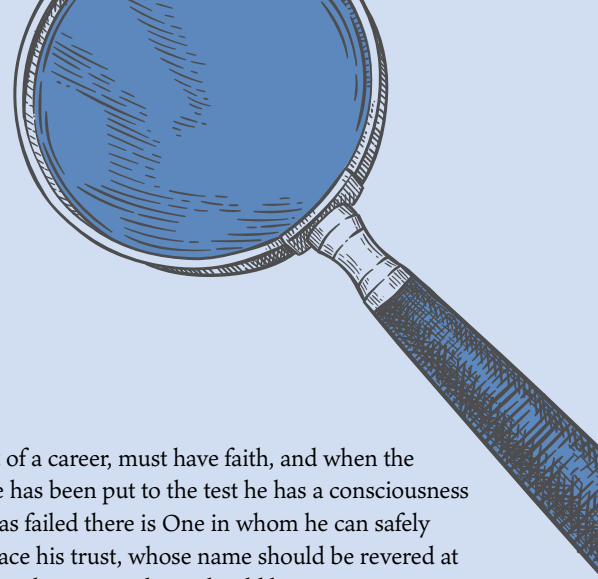
By James C. "Chris" Williams IV, Staff Writer



It was a Friday evening at 6PM and I was locking the door of the shop when I heard a diesel truck pulling in behind me. I had heard the sound of that particular motor before, and my mind quickly went down the list of everyone I knew who drove a truck with that motor. And John was one of them. Before I could turn around that familiar melodious voice floated across the parking lot to my ears. He growled, "Hey Brother Chris, Where do you think you are going? I've got some serious truck problems." "Well, you are just S.O.L. my Brother," I said. "There's no one here that can fix it until Monday." He got a shocked look on his face and said, "S.O.L.??? Do you know what that stands for?" "Don't look so shocked," I said. "Of course I know. It stands for Sorry, Out of Luck." "That ain't what it means in my neck of the woods," he chuckled. "I guess we are lucky that we aren't in your neck of the woods then," I replied. "What's wrong with your truck? It sounds good to me." "Awww there's nothing wrong with Ol Blackie," he grinned. "I was just giving you a hard time. Actually I have a pretty serious meeting with the owner of my company tomorrow morning, and it might not be a good one," he said as his grin turned into a frown. "They are doing a lot of cutbacks because of the economy, and it might have gotten to be

my turn. I will know tomorrow. It's not going to be easy to sleep tonight." I felt bad for him and told him that I had to work that night at the Fiesta in San Antonio at the Night in Old San Antonio. It's a big yearly party and he had never been. I knew it would take his mind off the next day, so I loaded him up and we headed downtown to Fiesta. Now Fiesta is a big deal in San Antonio. It is an eleven-day and night party of carnivals, parades, picnics, and more kinds of food than you can imagine. I have worked for the past twenty years at what they call Night in Old San Antonio, which is four nights of fun, food, and really happy people. My Softball buddies and I work the souvenir booth in clown alley. People come from all over the world to Fiesta in San Antonio and it's always a lot of fun so I thought John could eat all he wants and be around a lot of happy people .... some of them slightly to more than slightly inebriated. I figured this would be perfect for John. Little did I know how perfect it would be for him. The night started out calmly enough. I introduced John to the team, and he jumped right in selling t-shirts and all kinds of flashing souvenirs. After about twenty minutes I saw him sniffing the air and I could tell his production was going to go down quickly if I didn't feed him, so we joined the mass of party – goers who were hopping from food booth to food booth trying as many different things as possible. I told John that we would hit a few places and then go back to our booth and eat. Right around the corner from our booth was what they called "Fat Bread" which was some kind of English Muffin with a layer of cheese topped by a layer of mushrooms and heated up. I told John it was one of my favorites and he got four. I shook my head and told him to moderate because there was a lot of different food to try. He nodded his understanding, and we dove back into the crowd to find the next food booth. About fifty feet down we encountered a booth selling Bratwurst and Sauerkraut which I was going to pass up, but he nearly jerked me off my feet when he reached out to stop me. "I love German Braats and Kraut," he exclaimed. "OK get some and let's go," I said. Pretty soon we were back in the flow and by the time we got back to our booth we had stopped at least ten different food booths and bought three different kinds of meatballs, some nachos, two different kinds of Gorditas, a Turkey Leg, Some Fried Green Tomatoes, a couple of Corn Dogs, something called Matinee Chips which looked like big Fried Jalapenos, and he really got excited about a booth with "Steer on a Stick."

Visit <https://grandlodgeoftexas.org/texas-freemason-magazine> for the rest of the story.



# A Look Back

## The First Degree

By A. H. Rodrick – New Age Magazine, June 1925

### The significance of early-Masonic impressions

THE ENTERED Apprentice Degree, the first of Ancient Craft Masonry, is one which should be conferred with great solemnity, care, and impressiveness. When a candidate has been elected to receive the degrees of Freemasonry, the question is very often asked by some of his Masonic friends: "When do you get your Third?" Such an inquiry is doubtless prompted by a sincere desire to see the prospective brother raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason; it may sometimes, however, be induced by other motives. No matter what it is that causes the query the candidate is likely to form an opinion that the only degree of importance is the Third. We who have prayed for light should conscientiously realize the importance and significance of the First Degree.

### THE SEEKER of Light

The brother who has been initiated Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft has seen the light—he has beheld the form thereof—but the candidates in waiting for the First Degree present to me an almost indescribable picture. I have observed their facial expressions and have seen written on their countenances, fear, suspense, and a craving for the truth. They have been able to learn nothing from those whom they believe to be members of the Fraternity, and from those who are not they have heard confusing and conflicting fables. Their minds float on a sea of apprehension. I have seen men begin the Second and Third Degrees with a smile, but I have never observed this with the First, for the candidate feels himself entombed in mystery.

We of the Craft should remember that it is in this degree that the eyes of the candidate are opened for the first time presenting to his view the symbolic beauties of Masonry.

### EQUALITY, SOLID FOUNDATION

Before he enters he learns the foundation upon which Freemasonry is erected, and he cannot help but be impressed by the fact that a universal brotherhood of man, that ideal state of human relationship for which all peoples of the earth should pray, can never be established in the world by races or creeds but must be erected on the solid and impregnable rock of equality. Masons who profess Christianity must be conscious of the truth that His kingdom cannot come nor His will be done on earth as it is in heaven until this principle, as well as others enunciated by the Lowly Nazarene and Galilean Teacher, have been enthroned in the hearts of men wherein is being erected that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens. When men and Masons ponder over these things they soon come face to face with Deity, that Giver of every good and perfect gift, and when the Entered Apprentice reaches this step he unconsciously feels as did Moses of old at the burning bush when Jehovah said, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

### TRUST IN DEITY

Youth, at the outset of a career, must have faith, and when the Entered Apprentice has been put to the test he has a consciousness that when all else has failed there is One in whom he can safely and without fear place his trust, whose name should be revered at all times, and before whom every knee should bow, every tongue confess, and every heart petition before engaging in any undertaking worthwhile. But faith must have a foundation for belief and the foundation for faith and trust in God is found in His Holy Word—the Open Bible—wherein we are not allowed to forget that the earth after creation was in darkness.

### SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT

The Creator, seeing what the generations to come would be deprived of, if compelled to grope around in darkness, looked into the ages and reached the peak of His creative genius when He made light, that man and beast might behold the beauties of the universe and the glory of creation. As the earth was in material darkness, so man exists in spiritual oblivion until he has reached out and felt the influence of God by brotherly love, relief, and truth.

The Entered Apprentice, representative of Masonic beginning, is reminded of the helpless state of human beings when they begin the physical life, and what is expected of mankind when others are in distress. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me," are the words of the Master which describe practical Christianity.

Was it not our Most Excellent King Solomon who said: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"? Truly it has been said that first impressions are lasting ones.

### CORRECT TRAINING ESSENTIAL

With these two fundamental rules in mind, brethren should at all times be most cautious that Entered Apprentices are trained in the way they should go, and that the first impressions created in their minds are proper ones and conducive to the exalted principles of Freemasonry, and the ideals for which it stands and endeavors to put into daily practice.

Because of the susceptible frame of mind of the candidate for the First Degree to Masonic influence, masters of lodges, those who take part in the conferring of the degree, and instructors who take the candidate in charge, should feel the great responsibility placed upon them to create only such impressions on the child-Mason as will cause him to see Masonry as a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols; admonishing the practice of charity, inculcating morality, and teaching the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

# On The Masonic Road: The "Lost Battalion"

By Bill Crow, Associate Editor

Finally, back at the old Underwood Typewriter on my desk, hoping to travel "On the Masonic Road" again, and share information about Texas Masonry and "Lost Things" we all need to remember. (Memorial Day May 26, 2025)

This week in April 2025, has been a difficult week, losing a dear friend and stalwart Texas Mason, remembering those things we talked about and laughed about. Remembering our military experiences, similar but different, Jim Mendenhall being US Army, and myself, US Air Force, and our service in Vietnam in the "60's". Jim was very special, a friend and brother to everyone, and someone who will be missed greatly in Masonry.

I began this "On the Masonic Road" this way because we need to remember "Those who have gone this way before us" to really understand and appreciate our past Masonic Brothers "who held Masonry together" ... who in fellowship together with other Masons, helped build Masonry in Texas from 1836 to the present.

In 2004, I was asked to co-host a reunion of the Thirty Sixth Infantry Division, Second Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, Texas Army National Guard; "Survivors of the "Lost Battalion" in Wichita Falls, Texas. The reunion began with well over three hundred Texas Patriot Guard Riders, The Liberty Bell, three "Medal of Honor" recipients and a convention center full of World War II, American Prisoners of War (POW) incarcerated by the Japanese.

During the reception and prior to the reunion dinner and guest speaker, I was privileged to meet many of the "Lost Battalion POWs" and listen to stories of their incarceration. I did not retain much about what I heard until years later and then I remembered ... I recalled when greeting some of them with a handshake, one asked if I was a Mason. I asked him why he asked, and he stated



The photo of the crossed cannons represents the 113th Field Artillery Battery from North Carolina. It is included to show Masonic symbolism in military identification.

he felt a ring on my right hand as we greeted each other. Later another veteran came forward and stated he was a Mason from Jack County, Texas. Another told me he was a Mason from Mineral Wells, Texas, and another was from Jacksboro Lodge, Texas.

I don't recall any of their names now or where they went to Lodge or much else about them except, they were American and Masonic Heroes far away from home; malnourished, beaten and forced to labor for the Japanese. Most are deceased now as is the case with world war II veterans, mostly forgotten now except for their immediate family members, and deceased Masons often forgotten by their Masonic Brothers.

Those of us supporting the POWs during their reunion agreed the reunion was a very emotional experience while observing the "Members of the Lost Battalion" talking, laughing, some crying, with each other, remembering past friends, and remembering those that died during the incarceration. Thank God for men and Masons of that caliber.

The following is a brief history of the "Lost Battalion".

On August 27, 1940, as World War II engulfed both Europe and the Orient, a joint resolution of the United States Congress authorized President Franklin D. Roosevelt to federalize the National Guard. Within days, Roosevelt issued orders for the



mobilization of several state National Guard units. The Texas National Guard began its tour of duty as the Thirty Sixth Infantry Division United States Army, by reporting for federal active duty to Camp Bowie, near Brownwood, in the autumn of 1940. Within weeks, the new division increased its manpower from 11,737 officers and men to nearly 15,800 by the addition of new officers and Selective Service inductees from Texas and the surrounding states. The division participated in maneuvers in Louisiana during the summer of 1941. After the Thirty-sixth returned from the war games, the army alerted the *Second Battalion, 131st Field Artillery, for assignment. On the evening of November 10, 1941, the battalion entrained at Camp Bowie enroute to the West Coast; eleven days later the unit boarded the United States army transport Republic at San Francisco and joined a convoy bound for the Philippines.*

The *Republic* was sailing west of Hawaii on December 7, 1941, when the troops learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The convoy, still proceeding toward the Philippine Islands, which were under attack from another Japanese force, received orders to sail to Brisbane, Australia; the ships arrived there on December 22. Six days later, the battalion was ordered to board a Dutch ship, the *Bloemfontein*, and sail to Surabaya, Java, to provide ground support for an army air force unit. The Texans arrived on January 11, 1942, the same day the Japanese began invading the Dutch islands. Initially, the battalion acted as ground crew for the Nineteenth Heavy Bombardment Group, which had been forced to leave its original support sections at Clark Field when fleeing the Philippines. Shortly, when the bomb group was ordered to Australia, the flyers asked their leaders to allow the Texans to accompany them to Australia, since they were desperately needed. But the Second Battalion was left in Java to support the morale of the people there. The unit earned the title of “Lost Battalion” because they were not evacuated with other military forces. The Dutch surrendered the islands on March 8, 1942.

The Japanese imprisoned the Texans, along with 5,500 British and Australian troops, at a camp called Tanjong Priok, near Batavia. Five weeks later the battalion marched to a new prison known as Bicycle Camp, where they encountered the first of many acts of Japanese brutality. On October 2, 1942, nearly 200 battalion members were marched on board ship and transferred to Singapore. Nine days later most of the remaining members followed, and the group was reunited at Changi Barracks POW camp, formerly a British army post, before being shipped to Moulmein, Burma, on January 11, 1943. The Texans traveled by train to Thanbyuzayat, Burma, and immediately began work on the Japanese “Railroad of Death,” which ultimately connected Burma to Bangkok, Siam. The unit labored in various work camps on the railroad, including assisting on the famous “Bridge over the River Kwai,” and suffered numerous casualties and deaths. *Seventy thousand Allied prisoners of all nationalities*



*perished on the project.* In 1944 the Japanese transferred some of the Texans to prison camps in Cambodia and Vietnam and others to Bangkok, where the survivors of the Second Battalion remained for the rest of the war.

There was a time when we had the privilege of knowing and attending Lodge with men and Masons who had served during World War II. They were generally quiet, reserved and did not talk about their military service with just about anyone. They were the legacy Masons, the ones who the young new Masons looked to for help and wisdom, the tried and true in our Lodges. Few remain now and are often perceived as just ordinary old guys at Lodge. The official historical record of the Second Battalion, 131st Field Artillery might not list the number or names of Masons in the Battalion, but there were many Masonic Brothers from Wise and Jack Counties and from Fort Worth and surrounding Texas counties that were members of the Texas Army National Guard, Thirty Sixth Infantry Division, as well as members and Masons from Lawton, Oklahoma, and other Oklahoma towns near to North Texas.

The entrance of the United States into the Second World War marked the rise of nationalism, patriotism, and personal commitment. It was marked by men from all walks of life leaving their jobs voluntarily to be a part of something larger than themselves, hoping for the best and often enduring the worst. A time when men were men, doing the impossible for their country and for each other on the field of battle. Masons were there sacrificing injury and life, side to side with men from all walks of life.

Who were the Masons from Texas who fought, and some died serving our country? Who were the many thousands of World War II veterans that came home after the war and joined Masonry as part of a group that history clearly documents as our greatest Masonic growth ever recorded?

We are entering a time when many of our Texas Lodges don't remember those old guys in their Lodge who may have been a

Seventy thousand Allied prisoners of all nationalities perished on the project. In 1944 the Japanese transferred some of the Texans to prison camps in Cambodia and Vietnam and others to Bangkok, where the survivors of the Lost Battalion remained for the rest of the war.





part of World War II, Korea, or Vietnam or those that served that did not return. In the future, will we forget those warriors and Masons that served in Desert Storm, in Iraq, or Afghanistan? ... I hope not ...

In closing this "On the Masonic Road," Respect, Honor, and Pride to be an American in tough times are patriotic virtues that Masons continue to hold to because of who we are. Remember our older Masons, as we may not know what they may have endured to secure our future, maybe, too often ... Masons and Veterans who are forgotten.

On this Memorial Day, May 26, 2025, Let's recall and remember those Masons and Veterans who served, that we might live.

In loving memory of Jim Mendenhall, my friend, Brother, and my hero.

– Bill

**Links below for websites related to the "Lost Battalion":**

<https://texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/lostbattalion/index.htm>  
[https://www.wisecountytexas.info/misc%20genealogy/lost\\_battalion.htm](https://www.wisecountytexas.info/misc%20genealogy/lost_battalion.htm)  
[https://jackcountytexas.info/Misc/lost\\_battalion.htm](https://jackcountytexas.info/Misc/lost_battalion.htm)  
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=119304>  
<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=254341>  
<https://weplaythegame.us/photos-of-the-lost-battalion-of-texas/>



Provided tuition for summer camp for Adan



Provided Jane Justin school assistance for Colt



Provided Behavioral school tuition for Kason



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# The Struggle for the Soul of a Master Mason

By John R. Clements, PM Greenville Lodge No. 335, Contributing Writer

When becoming a Master Mason, the degrees teach us that “it is the internal and not the external qualification that makes a man a Mason” because we know that the internal part of a man connects the soul, consciousness, and emotion. The question is whether the man has internal knowledge of faith and conduct to be a Master Mason. The investigation suggested that a prospective candidate is interested in personal growth, spiritual growth, and emotional maturity to be made a Mason. Through the investigation committee assigned by the Lodge, the meeting of his family and neighbors should give insight into the character of the new candidate, i.e., external actions and conduct are fruits of the soul and consciousness. However, the investigation process has only gone so far. All men are sons of Adam and not without flaw.

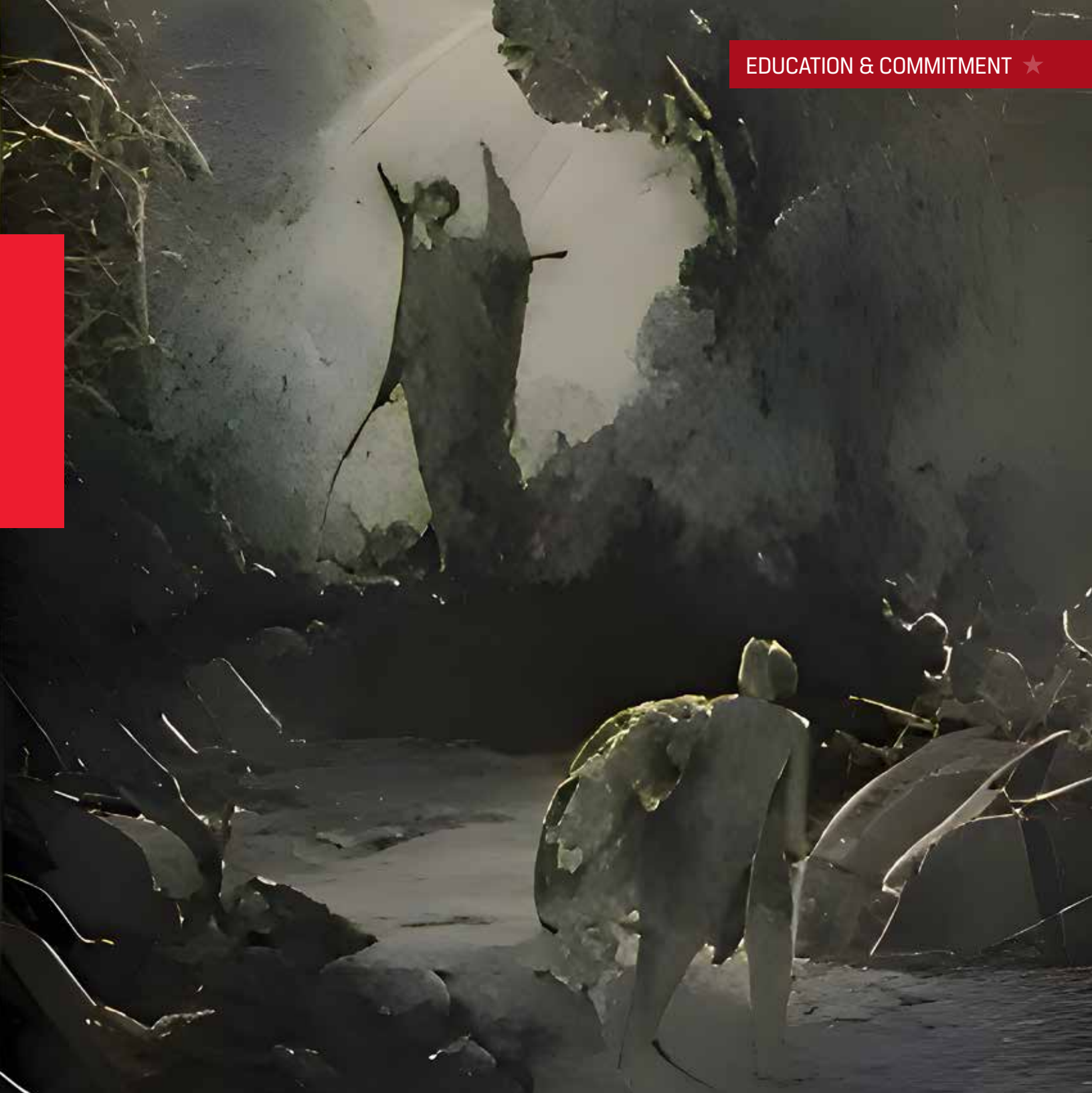
In the degree process, Masonry teaches us that Masonry has three great lights in the East, West, and South but none in the North. Why? There are many stories about why there is no light in the North. Initially, Masonry teaches us that the King Solomon temple was situated so far North of the sun’s path that the sun and moon, darting their rays from the meridian high, could not reach the North part, thus the title of “A Place of Darkness.” The name alone has an ominous tone, like something out of a horror movie. After some research, the stories of the darkness are fascinating. According to the book “The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan,” written in the 6th century, God had placed a large body of water on the North side of the garden. When Adam and Eve fell and were forced by God to leave the garden, God placed them in the West side of the garden to avoid Satan and the sea in the North, being that the sea was reserved for the righteous who would eventually return. God said that if Adam and Eve went into the water, it would cause them to be “cleansed of their sins, forget the transgression they had committed, and be no longer reminded of it in the thought of their punishment.”

The North (darkness and the abode of Satan and his followers), when embraced, can affect a man’s soul and conscience, create arrogance, and a false belief that one could not have committed any transgression against God or themselves. Solomon reminds us in Proverbs 16 verses 1 & 2 (NAS), “1. The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. 2. A man’s ways are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives.” If Adam and Eve had gotten in the water, they would have seen themselves “clean in his own sight.” Naturally, all sons and daughters of Adam have this excessive need for promotion, popularity, fame, and the pride of accomplishment.

“Cleansed of their sins, forget the transgression they had committed, and be no longer reminded of it in the thought of their punishment.”

The philosophy of Masonry reminds us that we should serve our fellow man with zeal and humility to move our communities forward. Albert Pike said, “What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” Pride leads to narcissism, which leads to fear, which stunts personal and spiritual growth. If Adam and Eve had gotten in the water, Mans redemption would not have occurred. As exemplified in the Grand Jurisdiction of Texas, last paragraph, when preparing a new candidate for the degrees, one statement stands out more than the others in the Monitor of the Lodge, “As a preparation for the mystic rites into which you are about to enter, you will now be asked to divest your mind and conscience of all mental prejudices and superfluities incident to the material and worldly life: and to remember that selfish aims and vanities, if present ...” Only by acknowledging and suppressing prejudice, unnecessary excessiveness, and pride can you grow mentally and spiritually as a Master Mason.

Brothers, there is an invisible internal thread that binds us together. When we choose to wade into the North, “A Place of Darkness,” we will begin to gossip, accuse, misinterpret, and create false perceptions and voice opinions on social media, dividing us. The consequence of not recognizing the influence of the North corrupts the internal and manifests externally. The soul of the Fraternity is affected, and division follows. Over the last several years, there has been a noticeable change in Masonry. In some ways, we have leaned toward the North more than in the past. With the advent of social media, we seem less connected to each other and more opinionated and suspicious or “clean in his own sight.” We become accustomed to thinking this is business as usual. Evil loves it when we ignore these issues and just go along. By applying Masonic philosophy, we can see through the rhetoric and be guided back to the light.



Freemasonry is here to foster self-improvement, pursue social and philanthropic causes, build integrity, and lead the membership to a sense of purpose. If the focus returns to “mental prejudices and superfluities,” the Fraternity will be divided against itself. Brothers, be aware of the influence hiding in plain sight. Pray to the Great Architect of the Universe for guidance and a clear mind, soul, and conscience that our light shines as a beacon for the world to see.

#### References

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- Monitor of the Lodge Revised 1982 Pg.11* (S. I. Smith, P. M. Parker, F. S. Tamsett, H. C. Robason, & J. B. Noland, Compilers). (2009). Grand Lodge of Texas A.F. & A.M.

# The Plumb Line and the Pitcher's Cleats

By Daniel Edwards, Contributing Writer

Brethren,

The plumb line is one of our most powerful working tools. It teaches us to walk uprightly — to be honest, fair, and true in all our actions, no matter who is watching. But sometimes, life puts that lesson to the test in ways we don't expect.

Just recently — in fact, at our season opener last Saturday — I found myself holding that invisible plumb line in my hand... and I came up short.

We had a brand-new player on the team. First game. First experience of organized baseball. And wouldn't you know it? The kid's a natural. A gifted arm. Poised. Confident. Our best chance on the mound that day.

But just before game time, I realized something: he was wearing cleats. In our league, for that age group, cleats are not allowed on the pitcher's mound — field-specific rule. The rules are clear.

But here's the thing: the umpires OKed it. Opposing coaches supported it. Everyone said it was fine. But I knew the rules. I had a choice to make — follow the rules and sit our new pitcher, or let him play and get the experience of a lifetime.

I tried to justify it.

*"It's his first game." "Just one honest mistake, butterflies." "He doesn't know any better." "His daddy knows, is pushing for it. He's justifying it too." "It's not like we're cheating — mounds are already damaged anyway. Opp coach is ok with it." "The umpire said it was ok."*

So I said nothing. I let him pitch.

And he did great. We took the lead. But later in the game, the other team started bending rules too — runners leaving early, some questionable calls, gray areas that shouldn't have been ignored.

**Importantly:** Our pitcher hit two batters. The opposing team was afraid of him. They came up with some sort of 'new rule' that did not exist to force his exit from the position. It was his first game ever; he was having a blast.

And in that moment, I wanted to speak up. I wanted to challenge it. But I couldn't.

Because I had already broken the line. I had compromised before the game ever started. He shouldn't have been there in the first place — forgot his appropriate shoes at home.

Integrity is not taught in our victories — It is taught in the choices we make when no one is watching when the pressure is on, and when justification is easy.

Brethren, the plumb line teaches us to stand tall — not just when it's easy, but especially when it's hard. And when we step off that upright path, even just a little, we lose the moral footing to hold others to account.

That moment stuck with me — not because we lost or won, but because I taught a lesson I didn't mean to teach. To that young pitcher, and maybe to the team.

*Integrity is not taught in our victories — It is taught in the choices we make when no one is watching when the pressure is on, and when justification is easy.*

We ended up losing that game. But honestly, it wasn't the loss that stayed with me. It was the lesson: *If I wanted to hold others to the rules, I had to live by them first.*

Brethren, the plumb line isn't about being perfect. It's about staying true — even when it's inconvenient, even when no one's looking, even when it might cost us something in the short term.

Because when we uphold the line, *we become the standard others can trust.*

So now, when I look at that plumb line in the Lodge, I don't just think of stone walls or perfect posture. I think of cleats. Of silence. And of the price of cutting corners.

And I remember: integrity is not built in the easy moments. It is built in the hard ones — one upright decision at a time.

And next game... I'll hold that line.



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# An Unexpected Duty: Andrew Jackson and Lyncoya

Part Four by Nathan Giesenschlag, Staff Writer



Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world.

— James 1:27

Andrew Jackson lay on his deathbed in September of 1813 from seemingly mortal wounds delivered by Jesse Benton. Pale, enfeebled, and with a partially disabled left arm, Andrew Jackson's life and legacy hung in the balances. Once more, this fierce defense of his honor and his intemperate nature brought pain and derision down upon his head. The chance at glory—and revenge—against the British in the War of 1812 appeared dead, until the mail brought an urgent note from James Madison's administration three weeks later: the Red Stick Creeks sacked and slaughtered Ft. Mims in south Alabama. Jackson received orders to take his Tennessee militia to Alabama, find the Red Stick Creeks, and destroy them.

The hour of redemption, revenge, and glory was at hand. Jackson willed himself off his deathbed, mobilized his army, and plunged headlong into the dense wilderness of territorial Alabama.

The Red Sticks were a confederation of rebellious factions that subscribed to the race war prophecies of the Shawnee seer Tenskwatawa and his more charismatic brother Tecumseh. The men who believed in the prophecies made up a motley crew. Some were full blooded Creek Indians, while others—perhaps most—were of mixed blood. Like all rebellions, there were factions and savage ambitions churning barely below the surface.



While it is true that the way that Old Hickory dealt with them after the war and during his presidency earned him the nickname "Sharp Knife," Jackson is more complicated on the issue of Indian relations than one might expect.

One of the prime leaders of the Red Sticks was Chief Red Eagle. Red Eagle was 7/8 Scotch-Irish and at times went by the name of William Weatherford.

Leading several thousand men into Alabama was no small feat, and like much of the rest of the American experience in the War of 1812, Jackson's army suffered from a lack of supplies and logistics almost from the beginning. The march was a close-run affair with threatened mutinies, an execution, wholesale comings and goings of units, and near starvation. In the winter of 1813-1814, rations got so low that the men received about ½ cup of parched corn and whatever game the hunters could shoot and cook for the army. One of those hunters was a young David Crockett, later a Congressman from Tennessee. He would be initiated into the Masonic order in Washington during his congressional tenure. The details are, sadly, obscured by time. One of the controversies about the legacy of Andrew Jackson centers on his treatment of the Native Americans he encountered and treated with. To be sure, the commonplace barbarity in the Creek War by Jackson and his enemies are the clanking cans tied around Jackson's historical leg. The commonly held view of Andrew Jackson is that he possessed a special enmity towards the Indians. While it is true that the way that Old Hickory dealt with them after the war and

during his presidency earned him the nickname "Sharp Knife," Jackson is more complicated on the issue of Indian relations than one might expect.

Prior to the decisive battle at Horseshoe Bend in March of 1814, Jackson and his army fought a number of small, yet significant engagements in pursuit of the main body of Red Stick Creek warriors. At one of these engagements—the Battle of Tallushatchee in November of 1813—an orphan from a family of Red Stick sympathizers was found on the battlefield in the arms of his dead mother. The boy, soon to be named Lyncoya, was about ten months old. According to Robert Remini's account in *Andrew Jackson and his Indian Wars*, one of Jackson's subordinates walked the smoking battlefield after the fighting stopped with some Indian allies. Seeing the boy in his dead mother's arms the allied Indian "women 'wanted to kill him because the whole race and family of his (blood) was destroyed.'" Jackson's subordinate said no, carried the boy to the General, and there—providentially for Lyncoya—Old Hickory immediately identified with the orphaned child. As you recall, Jackson was totally orphaned at fourteen from the ravages of the American Revolution. He never knew his father; his brothers died in the war, one in battle and one as a POW; and Jackson's mother died nursing American POWs in Charleston, SC. Jackson wrote



to his wife, Rachel, the following words about Lyncoya, “In fact, when I reflect that he as to his relations is so much like myself I feel an unusual sympathy for him.” Not all of Jackson’s militiamen appreciated Old Hickory’s sympathies, but neither did Jackson care what they thought. Lyncoya went to live with Andrew and Rachel Jackson at their Hermitage outside of Nashville.

For Masons, we are obligated to care for the widow and orphan among us—especially those of Brother Master Masons. When we reflect on why we concern ourselves with the helpless and hopeless, it is because we are commanded to do so in the Holy Scriptures. Repeatedly, the Old Testament makes clear that the LORD is, “A father of the fatherless, and a judge (protector) of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.” (Psalm 68:5) Additionally, care for the weak points out to the sincerity of your religion. Then, as now, the widow and orphan are often in want, and many do not have material wealth. A man who rescues the friendless with true charity and love demonstrates true religion. Jesus said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matt 25:40)

Andrew and Rachel Jackson loved Lyncoya as a son even though he was a Creek Indian. The boy grew up in his father’s Hermitage. The Jacksons gave Lyncoya a planter’s son’s education. The boy never lacked material blessings; Jackson notoriously spoiled his adopted children. As Lyncoya matured,

the old general wanted his son to go to West Point and become an officer, but the boy wanted to become a saddler and was apprenticed to that trade.

Medicine in antebellum America was primitive and often dangerous. Diseases carried old and young away unexpectedly. Pneumonia was macabrely known as the “old man’s best friend” while whooping cough and scarlet fever killed many children. The greatest fiend death employed in 1800s America was tuberculosis. Once acquired, you never beat it. The early country music legend Jimmie Rodgers, himself a victim of tuberculosis (and a Freemason in Mississippi) recorded the melancholy song, “TB Blues.” In one verse Rodgers sings, “I’ve been fighting like a lion, looks like I’m going to lose...Cause there ain’t nobody ever whipped the TB Blues.” Like Rodgers in 1933, Lyncoya died of tuberculosis at the age of 16 in 1828. Andrew and Rachel Jackson wept tears over the death of their son.

As Jackson’s army moved southward through Alabama in the winter of 1813-1814, they marched towards a climactic battle at Horseshoe Bend with the Red Sticks. Jackson’s army now included loyal Creek and Cherokee warriors, the ever-ready Tennessee militia, and stout U.S. Army regulars. Also, three future Texian Masons served in the ranks of Jackson’s army—Sam Houston, Edward Burleson, and James C. Neill. All would be at Horseshoe Bend, and all three would play pivotal roles in the Texas Revolution decades later.



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The Texas Masonic Charities Foundation expresses our sincere appreciation to the Masons of Texas. On 31 March 2025, we closed the 2025 grant cycle. As of the date of this communication, we have processed more than \$774,000 in matching grants to the Lodges as they continue to serve their respective communities. Together, we have “Made an Impact” by contributing \$2,451,852 to our state’s future leaders, teachers, and communities.

2025 Grant Summary (Value)					
	No. Lodges	No. Units	Lodge Commitment	TXMCF Match	Total
Scholarships	553	1689	\$1,424,952	\$625,250	\$2,050,202
Comm. Grants	245	247	\$152,850	\$60,125	\$212,975
Teacher Hon.	214	214	\$100,050	\$88,625	\$188,675

2025 Grant Summary (Statistics)				
	2024 Actual	2025 Goal	2025 Actual	2025 Actual : 2025 Goal
Scholarships	522	550	553	>100%
Comm. Grants	134	150	245	163%
Teacher Hon.	86	200	214	107%

TXMCF Match	
Scholarships	\$1,250
Comm. Grants	\$250
Teacher Honorariums	\$500

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