

The North Carolina Mason

"The North Carolina Mason" (USPS 598-260) is published bimonthly by The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of North Carolina, 2921 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, N.C. 27608. Third class postage paid at Oxford, N.C. 27565.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE NORTH CAROLINA MASON, Oxford Orphanage Printing Department, Oxford, North Carolina 27565.

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Published bimonthly by The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of North Carolina Successor to "The Orphans Friend and Masonic Journal".

Reynold S. Davenport, Editor Emeritus

New items, pictures, inquiries, comments and other correspondence should be addressed to:

Ric Carter, Editor
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Address changes should be addressed to: THE NORTH CAROLINA MASON
Oxford Orphanage Printing Department
Oxford, North Carolina 27565

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Notes From the Editor's Desk

In June, I took off with the girls to visit my sister in Virginia. The occasion was my niece's high school graduation and valedictory address. I called my brother-in-law and asked if he might be able to find a lodge to visit while I was there.

Within a couple of days, he'd gotten us an invitation to a Past Masters Night supper at Princess Anne Lodge. Then he called with the news that a neighbor he'd helped coach was going to be raised that week at Indian River Lodge. So began a short Masonic vacation and my first chance to visit an out-of-state lodge.

The direction and substance of the ritual is, of course, the same in Virginia. However, it does vary substantially in detail from time to time.

I didn't know if they were performing properly. I'd never witnessed their ritual before. I found myself transfixed as I followed every speech and floor action, straining to hear and see the North Carolina ritual simultaneously in my memory. I never saw our ritual so clearly before.

I was involuntarily searching for the differences in what was communicated as much as in what was said. Why did a certain part differ from ours? What purpose could this or that phrase serve? Why was a bit of floor work performed differently? What were they trying to get a candidate to understand? What was I supposed to be reminded of in

the opening and closing of the Lodge?

Most of us are highly tuned when listening to ritual work. We flinch when mistakes are made. We often see brothers sitting on the sidelines, head bent a little forward or back, silently mouthing the words being spoken aloud by others. Some like to be noticed by piping in a correction to a gaff made by a young officer. We routinely judge those lodges we visit by how accurately they steer through the words and motions so carefully preserved in the OSW.

It took a trip to Virginia for me to realize how far off base that can be.

Don't misunderstand. Preserving the ritual is of utmost importance. That shared experience is the foundation of our brotherhood. We should all strive for perfection in passing down our customs and knowledge.

What hit me was the realization that the search for perfection in ritual often makes us deaf and blind to what is being said, what we are attempting to teach our candidates. We have a tendency to judge the recitation. As with any communication, it is the meaning, not the words, which, in the end, are most important and lasting.

The next time I see degree work, I'm going to make a real effort to avoid grading the performance. I hope I'll use the opportunity instead to renew and expand my own knowledge. I'll try to hear it for the first time again.

On Proficiency

Most people did not know that Wayne had once joined the Craft (E.A. Arcana Lodge No. 123, Northwood, California). He was one of many who had "fallen through the cracks" without completing the degrees.

Wayne probably had not become sufficiently exposed to realize how much of a Freemason he had become. He did not complete the degrees for reasons perhaps known only to himself. We, as brothers, seldom take time to attempt to find out why. Everyone knew that Wayne had a speech impediment. Perhaps he was unable to repeat the proficiency requirements, or felt he could not, and quit. Who will ever know?

We "worry" a great deal about proficiency requirements and even attempt to legislate new, reduced requirements. Such changes are completely unnecessary. Those who are able to repeat the "posting" should be encouraged to do so, in tiled lodge. A successful presentation is a source of great satisfaction to many of us. However, the master of the lodge is remiss if he does not declare a candidate proficient when, after many sincere attempts, the candidate in all likelihood will not be able to repeat those "hallowed" lines, particularly before an audience.

Many a potentially good Mason has been lost to the Craft because perfection was required. Perfection is NOT the bottom line; rather it should be a sincere understanding. A great mistake will have been made if adequate time is not spent on "posting" the candidate. This is THE time when some of the symbolic meaning and some of the history of our great and gentle Craft can be shared with him. We do not do enough of this personal teaching. How else will he learn?

— By H. Allen Ohrt (PGM), on the passing of a prominent newspaper man, reported by the Southern California Research Lodge, *Fraternal Review*.

ACCORDING TO JIMROD

We present below this month's poetical offering from that distinguished Mason and philosopher,



JIMROD Q. WAXPILLOW

This crusty old Mason named Zeke
Wrecked his new car in the creek
Folks gathered about
Heard old Zeke shout,
"Gosh darn a new car that'll leak!"

Masonic Directory Error Correction

When the North Carolina Masonic Directory was produced, the name of James S. Loftin was accidentally omitted. Loftin is on the Board of Directors of the Masonic and Eastern Star Home. He is a member of Phalanx 31 in Charlotte.

Please make the necessary notation in your Directory. The Grand Lodge regrets the omission.

You Can Make A Miracle

Every North Carolina Mason has the opportunity to make a miracle. He need only become an organ and tissue donor. We never know if the life of a loved one might one day rest upon an organ transplant. There is a shortage of donors.

I know first hand how important organ donations are. On October 6, 1991, I received a heart transplant. It gave me a second chance at life.

My case was a miracle. A heart became available for me eleven days after my name was put on the list. The doctor said that I had less than a month to live with my old heart.

Since my operation, I talked to a patient on the heart transplant list who has since died before one became available. It was a sad and sobering experience. There are 21

people on the list for a heart transplant right now at Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte. Statistics predict that 6 of them will die before a heart becomes available.

As many as 2,200 potential recipients died in 1990 waiting for organs. There are 170,000 patients on dialysis. Currently, there are over 24,000 people in the United States waiting for an organ transplant. Each year the list grows.

For those waiting for a heart, 3 out of 10 will die before a donor is found. Money will not buy an organ. We need donors.

When a sudden, tragic accident takes the life of one person, it is a double tragedy if a second person dies because he did not have the benefit of the deceased's organs.

— By Robert Byrum, *Eureka* 317.

What is the Mystic Tie?

What is the Mystic Tie? Is it an obligation taken before an altar? Is it a covenant? Is it a thing one can hold and see? Or is it a matter of the inner life, in which a person thinks thoughts never told and learns truths that cannot be fully taught? Any list would be incomplete but surely friendship is part of it, teaching and learning are part of it, the universality of Freemasonry is part of it, and mystery is part of it. It comes to men in as many ways as there are men and to those who have known it, none would think of denying its strength.

During the tragedy of the Civil War valiant brothers fighting on both sides at times found the bond of the Mystic Tie to be strong and capable of gentle miracles even during that terrible period of our history.

On the side of the Confederacy none was more famous or infamous than General John Morgan, "The Grey Ghost," who was raised in Lexington Lodge. Fighting as a guerrilla, he led his mounted column of Johnny Rebs in a destructive 1863 raid through Illinois. When he later discovered his riders had looted the jewels and regalia from various Masonic lodges, he made one of his men take them back at considerable risk!

An even more incredible tug of the Mystic Tie occurred during the first day of battle at Gettysburg. The word was passed along the two opposing lines that the little lodge in the town of Gettysburg was holding a meeting. Blue and Grey met as brothers—the lodge was then closed and both sides returned to their respective lines to resume the fight.

In another 1863 incident Brother John Hart, a Union naval officer engaged near Bayou Sara, La., was overcome by fever. A white flag was run up the mast of his ship. Two Confederates rowed out and were asked if there was a Masonic lodge nearby. The Southerners escorted the body ashore where both Yankee and Confederate brothers took part in the Masonic funeral rites. Upon conclusion they bid each other goodbye and the Yankees were escorted back to their warship — down came the truce flag and the bombardment resumed.

A Southern raider, the Barque Taconay, had been enjoying considerable success sinking Union tonnage off the coast of Maine until finally it was surrounded by Yankee gun boats. As it was about to be rammed by a Union ship, its entire crew arose and gave the Masonic sign of distress. The captain of the onrushing ship recognized the sign, gave the wheel a most compassionate and fraternal twist to the East, stopped, and picked up the Southerners unharmed! Outraged by this, mobs appeared at the fort where the prisoners were detained and were stood down by Major Anderson, who said, "These are my prisoners of war, all gallant men, and I will protect them with my life."

The foregoing are but a few examples of the magic of the Mystic Tie of Masonry. It has silenced cannon and united enemies under its spell.

— By William A. Hill, *Grand Historian*, The North Dakota Mason, 1991.

Tyler Defends Lodge Against Possum

The Phoenix Lodge 43 in Akaroa, New Zealand had a practice night with a difference during 1991. It was fortunate that the brother concerned had been taught to remain firm and do his duty.

We were just to commence a 1st degree emulation practice when one of the pictures on the wall moved! On investigation a possum was found poking its head through a hole in the wall. Not deterred, and at a moment's notice Bro G. Curry armed himself with the Tyler's sword and with great aplomb drove it through the neck of the intruder. Somehow, and this remains a mystery to the brethren present, he managed to get the animal turned around so that he was holding the tail through the hole.

The other brethren assisted from a posi-

tion some 20 feet to the rear as the real struggle started. Bro Curry asked for their help as he braced both feet against the wall about five feet from the ground. Boy! did that possum hold on! Finally, however our brother was victorious, holding by the tail what turned out to be an imposter as to sex, for it was one of the biggest 'does' anyone had seen for years.

After judgement, it was taken outside and put to the sword. A very eventful evening and one unlikely to have been repeated elsewhere. The Phoenix Lodge Tyler's sword is possibly the only one to have drawn blood in defence of a lodge's integrity.

— by Gordon Duncan, *Freemason, Issue No. 1, 1992. Freemason is the journal of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand.*

Shelter From the Storm Lodges in Israel

Israel is a nation of frequent upheaval and fear. Is there any sanctuary from the social struggles there? Yes and no.

On January 15, 1991, the newly installed Grand Master of Israel, Mordechai Blazer said, "Despite the strains of decades of war between Jews and Arabs, despite the daily menace of the intifada, it is reassuring that there is still a place where Jews and Arabs, Moslems, Christians, and Druse may meet on the basis of fraternity and mutual respect, that is the Masonic Lodge. Since all discussion of political and religious belief is excluded from our Lodges, we can maintain that spirit of human unity and harmony that characterizes our Lodges."

That speech was made in a "hall...already sealed with plastic sheeting in preparation" for the war in the gulf. It was the evening of the deadline offered to Saddam for withdrawal from Kuwait. At home, they had already sealed their "safe" rooms and fitted their gas masks.

There are currently 3,000 Masons in 65 lodges in the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, A.F. & A.M. They have lodges that do ritual work in Hebrew, Turkish, French, English, Spanish, Arabic, and German. Their official publication, *The Israel Freemason*, contains articles in several languages. As a result, it reads back to front in addition to front to back; left to right and right to left.

Three volumes of "Sacred Law" are placed on its alters: The Tanach (Hebrew Bible), New Testament (for Christians), and Koran (for Muslim brothers). The Seal of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel includes the Jewish Shield of David, the Christian Cross, and the Muslim Crescent, all embraced by the Square and Compasses.

In the face of such success in adversity, we should be encouraged about solving the little disturbances we face day to day in our Masonry.

—from *The Voice of Freemasonry* and *The Israel Freemason*.



Israel's Grand Lodge seal carries the symbols of three of the world's major religions.