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A personal journey

by RW Bro. Douglas C. Collins, Junior Grand Warden

Grand Masonic Day is a great opportunity to share thoughts and exchange new ideas. And one of those new ideas is the idea of sharing this day electronically with those around the jurisdiction unable to be with us in person. For those sharing with us electronically, thank you for being with us as well.

Making us think, and question, is one of the goals, I believe, of our Craft. Without thought, we often take things far too literally.

Brethren, I thank you first of all for allowing me to set my course on a new masonic journey. I must tell you that this journey has been immensely satisfying. It has taken me to new places, has allowed me to meet so many new friends, and has given me a greater understanding of the state of our Craft, and how we can work together to meet some of the challenges ahead.

This journey has shown me

that we have some great challenges ahead, but more importantly, it has revealed great windows of opportunity, some of which I will address today. For years, I have had a programme on radio and television called *One Man's Opinion*, where I get a chance to comment on a variety of issues. So I have titled my presentation today: *Freemasonry- One Man's Search for Meaning*. To my way of thinking, it speaks to the essence of Freemasonry. During the next few minutes, it is my intention to arouse in you a sense of urgency.

When I let my name stand for Junior Grand Warden, and had the privilege of addressing the brethren in Nanaimo in June 2012, I remarked that it was my belief that Freemasonry was a deeply personal journey. As such, each one of us is affected in a different way when he takes his obligation on the *Volume of the Sacred Law*. And although the masonic



The Kamloops Masonic Centre has recently completed construction of their Masonic Library and Resource Centre.

journey is about a man moving forward in his life, in his own time, at his own pace, and to the level of his own capacity, nevertheless, if Freemasonry is to be relevant to the man, he must experience the baptism of the pursuit of knowledge, and particularly, the need to think, and understand.

The fundamental principles of our Craft: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth—Fraternity, Liberty and Equality—Tolerance, Forgiveness, and Acceptance.

Of late, I have a sense that we may be lacking in our search for meaning, may have lost some of our desire to learn

those principles, to study, to really be concerned with what it was we were searching for when we were accepted as candidates for initiation. I sense that we may be too focussed on peripheral items rather than what our order is about, and what the Craft should mean to us. We have always considered ourselves a thinking man's fraternity. How often, as Freemasons, do we reflect upon what our principles mean, and how they can and should apply to our lives? As one of my learned brothers says "Doug, you must review, reflect and

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VOLUME 76 / NUMBER 7

EDITED by Trevor W. McKeown for the Grand Secretary's Office and published by the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of British Columbia and Yukon. The VIEWS AND OPINIONS expressed in the *Masonic Bulletin* are those of the individual authors and writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of this Grand Lodge. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions. CORRESPONDENCE: 1495 West Eighth Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia V6H 1C9 Canada. WEB: <http://freemasonry.bc.ca> TELEPHONE: +1-604-736-8941. FACSIMILE: +1-604-736-5097. EMAIL: editor@freemasonry.bc.ca

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respond." My dad always told me there was more than just meetings, more than festive boards, more than just the conviviality of being with each other. He said, "We must read or listen to ideas, we must reflect on what they mean to us, and to our fellow man, and then we must accept the challenge to respond."

I have tried to make that a big part of my masonic experience.

Consider this: do you ever seriously contemplate, either by yourself or in a group, what a virtue such as tolerance really means, what honour means, what brotherly love means? Is there real meaning in Freemasonry anymore? We have, as a fraternity, much soul searching to do. We need to focus on what it means to be a Freemason. The search for what is important in our lives, to learn from each other and to become better for each other, is critical for all we do as Freemasons.

When I interact with people at work, or people I meet in the street, I try to remember that these are people with whom I can share, in some way, those principles and virtues; where I can be a positive influence, and not a negative one.

It isn't just the camaraderie and the festive boards and the *joie de vivre* we get as brothers. Surely the goal is to seek a better way of life, not just for ourselves, but for those around us. Surely that is what our forefathers sought when they contemplated the issues of the day probably in ancient taverns and coffee houses. Perhaps these coffee houses were where some of the great ideas were formed. Coffee, you know, is a strong stimulant, and I am told coffee used to be brewed much stronger than it is now. Maybe that stimulation encouraged the type of thought and discussion that led



Worlds of Unspeakable Beauty unfold,
Glorious Splendor of Mysteries untold,
And Sophia whispers, "Behold, Behold!"

Bro. Michael Miller
Progress Lodge No. 87

to the development of ideas that formed the basis for new laws, for orderly growth, for new directions, for a brighter time in the life of a country. Perhaps one of our goals should be start up a series of masonic coffee houses which would stimulate new thought and direction.

When I petitioned to become a Freemason it was because I wanted to learn the values that have stood the test of time. I am finding that many young brethren are searching for that same meaning. Sure, some have joined because they get a lot out of the social aspect of the Craft, the camaraderie, and so on. But I believe those men also have a desire to learn and study. I don't find them objecting to a good education paper, or a good topic of discussion. Here's an example of what I mean.

W Bro. Wesley S. Regan recently wrote in the *Masonic Bulletin* and, with his permission, I paraphrase him here: "People like myself have grown up in an insane generation. We crave something that is genuine, something meaningful, something appealing to the nobler part of us." That is what I believe we are committed to do as Freemasons.

Since Freemasonry was formalized in the early 1700s, Freemasonry has been a fraternity. It has been a gathering of like-minded men, sitting together in groups discussing ideas, learning, educating themselves, not only about the Craft, but about life. We have

always had generations of men coming into the brotherhood, many at a young age, and they have stuck with Freemasonry because of those ideas, the idea of talking about what the principles of the Craft mean, what forgiveness is, what tolerance is, what is meant by brotherly love, relief and truth.

Why should this new

generation of men be any different than when I was a young man entering the Craft? Or a young man entering the Craft in 1850, or 1900, or 1950?

Times have changed, for sure, but times are always changing. And one of the benefits of Freemasonry is that the principles of the Craft haven't changed. I agree that camaraderie is important, that people should feel well-met. Without that, we forget one of the great principles of the craft. But when our forefathers were holding their early meetings in those rooms above the tavern, and they were having that pint, or in the coffeehouses having a cup, they were discussing the principles of the Craft, how they could make their society



W Bro. Brian V. Turner, Bro. Guvenic Ergin, RW Bro. Jonathan H. Broadberry, RW Bro. Richard A. Money, Bro. William R. Brown, and W Bro. James H. Fulton.

Kamloops Masonic Resource Centre

What a difference a day makes! Friday, 25 January 2013 saw a transformation at the Kamloops Masonic Resource Centre.

Our newly renovated banquet area now includes a 20' x 20' room facing the street, dedicated to our Library and Museum. The custom millwork was installed earlier in the week and Director, W Bro. Brian V. Turner, the inspiration and driver of the project, was delighted but not about to stop there.

Now for the books! A team of brethren, with a little direction from librarian, RW Bro. Jonathan H. Broadberry, set to work unpacking a pile of boxes. By early afternoon, when recently passed Fellowcraft, Bro. William R. Brown, arrived to help, almost a thousand catalogued books were on the shelves!

Much more remains to do, but the light of Freemasonry is shining bright in Kamloops! ■

better, how they could improve their lives and the lives of those around them. They were searching for meaning. They weren't just eating and drinking. They were there for a greater purpose. In the *Masonic Survey* done a few years back, one of the comments made by some brethren was that good festive boards were important.

I agree, but I would ask you to contemplate whether that was all they meant in their answer. I'd like to see those festive boards combined with other things that hark back to what Freemasonry is about. What's wrong with education at a festive board? Lodges can combine the camaraderie we all seek with some active discussion on what it really means to be a Freemason. If a lodge has a great meal, then goes into a meeting where educational papers are presented and then discussed, where we engage each other in a spirit of brotherhood, surely this is the essence of why we are here.

To paraphrase the *Address to the Brethren*, our object is the cultivation of the human mind, to draw aside that veil and become acquainted with all its mysteries, and to combine our moral instruction with social intercourse. This is what Freemasonry has done for hundreds of years and it is what will keep us strong in the future.

But what does it mean when we say that Freemasonry is a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols? Let's talk about morality. What is an allegory?

Connect with your brethren to explore meaning. It's how we learn. We want to meet like-minded men, we want to exchange thoughts with them that will give meaning to our lives, to become instrumental in reaching out to our fellow man and make our world better, one step at a time.

While Freemasonry is a deeply personal journey, as I said at the beginning, it is also



Two brethren of this jurisdiction have been recipients of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Award for service to Canada: RW Bro. Charles M. Buchanan and W Bro. M.F. 'Skip' Whitfield.

a journey that has to have some guidance and focus, it has to be a personal journey within the concept of some general principles, and that's what the history of Freemasonry teaches us. That's why we have education in our lodges, presented by people like the people who have spoken here today. That's why we search our past, so that we may understand our future. Those principles that we stand by have to be constantly refreshed in our minds, and when we reach that stage where we meet the Great Architect of the Universe, as we all will surely do some day, we can say that our search for meaning led us somewhere. It led us to a life of service, to a life committed to brotherly love, relief and truth, to a life where we fulfilled the chief point in Freemasonry, to endeavor to be happy ourselves and communicate that

happiness to others.

Brethren, I want to challenge you today. I recently heard in a meeting that life begins at the end of your comfort zone. It's time we all challenged ourselves to move outside our comfort zone. It's time we really started to look at what Freemasonry means. As you challenge yourself, step outside your comfort zone and challenge your brethren. Put yourself into a leadership rôle and ask them what they desire.

I'm going to tell you without hesitation that my search for meaning in the Craft has allowed me to better myself, and, I hope, become a better person to those I come in contact with. Those close to me will tell you that I am more tolerant, more caring, and more of a brother than I was years ago. I credit Freemasonry with helping to make that happen.

And so here is my first challenge. In the next few days, I encourage you to have a meaningful conversation with a brother. It could be before this day is out. It could be at your next lodge meeting. Make it within the next two weeks. Talk to each other about your ideas, pick one virtue and discuss with that brother what it means to both of you. Start the ball rolling. It is my hope that making people think why they have joined this Craft, to search for what it is that will allow them to become better Freemasons, will open these windows of opportunity to a bright future for our brotherhood. And more importantly, at the risk of sounding trite, it will allow them to become the leaders we need in our Fraternity, to lead us into the future, strong and vibrant, with hope that we can work for a better world, just like our forefathers have done for generations.

It is only by searching for meaning that we really make a difference. Education is so critical. I would ask you to think

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Freemasonry
:
the art and
science of
right living

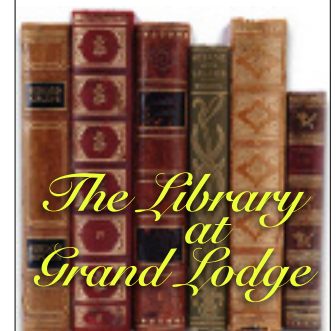


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on this—the price we pay for a lack of education, of study and application what we learn is an ignorant fraternity. When a man truly understands the message of the ritual, it is then that he can become the instrument for positive change in his family, his community, and by extension the world. And that is why Freemasonry exists. Through personal development you change the world. That was the intent of our forebears when they created this remarkable philosophy and took it into the wider world. They realized that when a man is better, everything he touches becomes better. To improve the world in some small or large way is our legacy, and our mission! That is the benign influence of freemasonry as it works for the common good. Each of us needs to start that search for meaning, to determine how we can go back to our Lodges and challenge our brethren to open these new windows of opportunity, to build that strong foundation, that rock we need to anchor us in this turbulent world. I challenge you, Brethren, to join me in that search today. ■

Excerpted from a presentation by RW Bro. Douglas C. Collins at the 19 January 2013 Grand Masonic Day at Vancouver.

Recognizing a stroke

Remember the three steps: STR. Read and Learn! Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify.

Unfortunately, the lack of awareness often spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

S—Ask the individual to smile.

T—Ask the person to talk and speak a simple sentence (Coherently) (*i.e.* Chicken Soup)

R—Ask him or her to raise both arms.

If he or she has trouble with any one of these tasks, call the emergency number immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Now researchers have discovered a new indicator of a stroke. Ask the person to stick out his or her tongue. If the tongue is 'crooked', if it goes to one side or the other, this is also an indication of a stroke. ■

Flex your franchise

The Committee on Credentials reported at the Annual communication in June last year that twenty-four warranted lodges had sent no official delegate to participate in the deliberations of Grand Lodge.

By failing to send an official delegate, over a thousand Freemasons were deprived of a voice in the affairs of the Craft.

Each year the Grand Secretary's office notifies each lodge of the dates of the Annual Communication and the legislation to be considered.



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY MARCH 2013

1	F	Grand Sessions	Order of the Amaranth	Tsawwassen
5	T	District 28	Blue Mountain 182	Port Coquitlam
7	Th	District 14	Keystone Lions Gate 115	Vancouver
14	Th	50 year presentation at Miriam 20		Vernon
16	S	District 1	United Peninsula 24	Victoria
21-22	Th-F	Grand Session	BC Job's Daughters	Richmond
23	S	District 5	Nanaimo Lodge No. 110	Nanaimo

Further reminders are given by the District Deputy Grand Masters. Further, every lodge is required to submit the names of proxies for their principal officers.

The Craft needs the active support and leadership of each and every lodge in the jurisdiction. Online registration for the 2013 Annual Communication opened 15 February. Plan to attend! ■

Lodge Notes

The brethren of **Prince of Wales Lodge No. 100** are justifiably proud of their secretary, RW Bro. Charles M. Buchanan, who is the most recent recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for service in his community. This is the second such award to a brother of this jurisdiction that your editor is aware of.

The brethren of District 13 have organized a Night at the Opera for 16 March when Bro. Wolfgang A. Mozart's Magic Flute will be performed at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver. Tickets for dinner and the show are available

until 25 February from W Bro. Patrick Wells of **Melrose Lodge No. 67** at d13events@vancouverfreemasons.ca but are going fast. ■

Grand Masonic Day

Another Grand Masonic Day has come and gone to tumultuous applause and nothing remains but to remind the brethren that the event was not only webcast but will remain available for viewing online at freemasonry.bcy.ca/vgmd/vgm_day31.html. ■

Just a buck

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights recently announced it will open in 2014. Although a date has not been finalized, expectations are for the autumn. To date, Friends of the Museum has raised \$138 million in cash and pledges, and is committed to raising a total of \$150 million. To this end they have mounted an exciting new national advertising campaign. ■

Nota bene

Celebrating a lodge anniversary

There are three key dates in a lodge's founding: its institution, warranting and constitution. It is only after the lodge has received its warrant and its officers have been installed that the lodge can be considered complete. The preferred date for celebrations is the constitution date: the anniversary of the installation ceremony following the granting of the warrant. ■