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# Through the masonic looking glass

by Bro. P. Kern Schmid, Excelsior Lodge No. 195

For three hundred years men have been intellectually and spiritually challenged through the complexity of the masonic cosmology. Our western culture is infused with layer after layer of the symbolic interactions of masonic ritual between religion, philosophy, culture, history and politics. Although religious or political proselytizing is forbidden in lodge, one cannot help but notice a clear pattern which mirrors certain aspects of the profane world.

Hierarchy in the Craft takes the form of an elected dictatorship, based on free will. A master is democratically elected, yet retains all powers within the lodge for the duration of his mandate. This form of autocracy that changes every year enhances the experiences and teachings, as they are relayed through different angles, forms and perceptions

with each new Master, his whims and personality. This form of discipline is mostly enforced through self-discipline, as each Freemason must adapt to the different style and form of governance, thus involuntarily exercising humility in the acceptance of every Master—whether or not he agrees or disagrees with a particular decision—and submit to the common rule and will of the Master, for the good of Freemasonry in general.

This creates a quasi-democratic form of government, where all powers are conferred (and, if needs be, removed) by election. As each Freemason agrees to the contract of the common lodge, this reflects each person's allegiance to the social contract by subordinating him or herself to citizen's-created laws as a collective. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau puts it: Each of us



MW Bro. Dennis G. J. Marsh, retired sawmill owner and Grand Master for 1987-1988, was initiated into Miriam Lodge No. 20 in Vernon, in 1963 and recently received his Fifty Year Long Service jewel.

puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.

Rousseau was one of the greatest figures of the Age of Enlightenment, which spurred the theory of the social contract, a theory which questioned the authority of the state over the individual and in the midst of which Freemasonry came to light. As such, Freemasonry is itself a form of revolution, albeit intellectual; but our craft within the confines of the lodge does not

recognize sovereign nations on a political level, nations which we sometimes refer to in lodge with a somewhat distant, almost disdainful tone, our craft being at that time the ultimate object of our allegiance.

Just as politically opinionated discussion is forbidden in lodge, so is religious discussion in the form of proselytism. Technically this does not include discourse of a religious nature in form of comparison between cultural or religious practices, or for the purposes of masonic education. This however does

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## Grand Treasurer statements of availability



### W Bro. Mark G. Forster

Raised into Prince Charles Lodge No. 153, Kelowna, in 1995, in 1999, W Bro Forster affiliated with Perfection Lodge No. 75, New Westminster, where he served as Worshipful Master for 2004-2005. He has served as Treasurer, additional terms as Junior Warden, and is currently Senior Warden.

W Bro Forster serves as the Treasurer for the Westminster Masonic Holding Company and, for the past four years, as chairman of the Grand Lodge Committee on Finance.

A Certified General Accountant with more than 25 years of business and consulting experience, he has worked in banking and trusts, manufacturing, and has many years of consulting for Fortune 500 companies including banking, telecommunications, internet, and consumer industrial products.

He is currently self-employed, providing technical and administrative support in the health care industry as well as working part time as the CFO and controller for several junior exploration companies.

W Bro Forster is married to Pauline, and has four children, Nicolas (13), Emma (15), Riley (20), and Christopher (22).

W Bro. Forster enjoys many outdoor family activities, including skiing, ATving, and RVing. ■



### W Bro. B. A. 'Bernie' Magnan

Born in Montreal in 1948 and educated across Canada, W Bro. Magnan was raised in DeWolf Lodge No 78, Port Coquitlam, in 2006. He served as Worshipful Master for 2010-2011 and currently serves as Director of Ceremonies.

A trained economist, he specializes in project management, turnarounds, strategic planning and economic planning and also lectures on Canadian Economics.

He is a Certified Management Consultant (CMC), a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) and was awarded a Fellow CMA (FCMA) by CMA Canada in 2008. He is currently a director of CMABC and has also served as a director for CMCBC, Vancouver Opera, The Vancouver Board of Trade and Bard on the Beach Theatre Society.

While serving as board member on various non-profit organizations, especially in the performing arts sector, he served on their respective audit committees. He has also served as treasurer of several of these organizations.

This past year, he worked with the current Grand Treasurer to reconcile the Lodge Annual Returns. W Bro. Magnan is also a member of the CGMNA 2015 Organizing Committee. ■



### W Bro. Dieter Steimecke

W Bro. Steimecke was born in Germany in 1946, emigrated to Canada in 1962, and is married to Ann née Brake, with two children. He completed BSc Agriculture Economics and post-graduate business courses from the University of Saskatchewan.

*Freemasonry:* Raised into St James Lodge No. 80 in 1996, Worshipful Master, 2003-2004, current Lodge Treasurer, Grand Lodge Finance committeeman 2001-2004, past Volunteer Cancer Driver for eight years.

*Entrepreneurship:* Private equity ventures in Germany, Asia, USA and Canada such as larger manufacturing, import-export and service operations.

*Governance:* Corporate, managing- or advisory director at management, holding companies, manufacturing and trading groups based in Canada, Germany and Hong Kong.

*Finance:* Managerial rôles (credit, operations) first at Scotiabank as Manager, then HSBC Bank in Canada as Assistant Vice President and internationally at HSBC Hong Kong as Senior Manager and Division Head, European Companies.

*Administration:* National and regional positions for the Federal Department of Agriculture and University of Saskatchewan. ■



### W Bro. John A. Taggart

A graduate of Simon Fraser University, majoring in Economics and Commerce, W Bro. John A. Taggart has enjoyed a varied career in finance, first tutoring bookkeeping students and later as a Bank Manager for the Bank of Nova Scotia, and the Business Development Bank.

After assisting with the establishment of a Schedule B Bank operation in Vancouver for Soci t  General S.A.

Canada Ltd. he returned to the Business Development Bank as Director of the Bank's Venture Capital Division for Ontario and finally as Assistant Vice President, "responsible for" the bank's lending for the Province of BC.

He then took on responsibilities as president and CEO for Aqua Clean Ships Group of Companies until retiring in 2002.

He served as Vice President of The Venture Capital Association of Canada 1983-1985 and has served as treasurer and president of several community associations including Richmond Gateway Theatre.

A member of St. James Lodge No. 80, he served as Master in 1990 and 1991 as well as Treasurer for over ten years.

He is also the current Worshipful Master. ■



**Masonic looking glass**  
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not eliminate the notion of a religious system within the Craft which, even if not unique, possesses distinctive masonic traits. This system can be perceived from the outsider as a form of secular humanism, yet Freemasons know that there is a more fundamental, more complex and esoteric reality to the lodge's approach to spirituality. Mainstream religions often highlight the interventions of individual deities in the creation, progression and future of humanity and the universe, as well as the individual fates and actions of all people. This aspect is not reflected in Freemasonry as one joins of his own free will and accord. The Great Architect of the Universe does not have a direct influence on Freemasons within the lodge, neither in the conferral of degrees or ritual work.

Freemasons do not talk directly to a deity but proceed with craft work in the presence of a higher power as a witness to the operative actions of men. The representation of the divine is called the Grand Architect of the Universe, a non-denominational, impersonal and neutral form, emphasizing architecture and creation. In no way does Freemasonry make reference to the singularity or plurality, gender or cultural background of a particular deity. This is to naturally respect each member's personal convictions and traditions, be it monotheistic or polytheistic.

But from a more practical, geometric and masonic point of view, the very concepts of singular and plural are in essence non-existent, and are but byproducts of our obsessive brains, genetically hardwired to recognize patterns in all things, of which singular and plural are abstract notions. This spiritual system can be equated to Einsteinian Deism, as in all

things outside of the theory of general relativity, of which time and space exist only within the confines of our universe.

Political and religious inclinations in the Craft do not hinder in any way our cognitive patterns and processes and freedom of thought; on the contrary, cultural, religious and political diversity can only strengthen our cohesive congregation of like-minded men within the structure of the lodge, in a progressive and consolidating fashion.

The term "freethinker" was originally coined by Anthony Collins (1676-1729), a friend and confidant of John Locke, who drafted many papers and essays confronting mainstream religion. Although Collins was not a Freemason, his philosophical inclinations gravitated around the dichotomy between freedom of thought in a deistic fashion, and traditional theological dogma. In his most famous work, *The Discourse of Free Thinking* (1713), he wrote: "Because he who thinks freely does his best toward being right, and consequently does all that God, who can require nothing more of any Man than that he should do his best, can require of him." This simple sentence represents perfectly the duties and responsibilities of each Freemason in lodge, under the auspices of the Great Architect of the Universe, and highlights our moral obligations in all simplicity in the sense that our freedom of thought is the key to unlocking our natural abilities for altruism and harmony within our cosmology, which ultimately is our moral obligation under the benevolent patronage of the Supreme Architect.

These moral obligations stem from a very basic anthropological survival process, better known as Reciprocal Altruism. Although there are many theories that explain the origins of morality or social interactions, the human altruistic system is a sensitive

and unstable one.

The phenomenon of "reciprocity" in nature is seen by evolutionary biologists as one way to begin to understand human morality. The original function of altruism, which can be traced back to our biological ancestors millions of years ago (and which we see in many species today) is basically to ensure the survival of a particular group, in conditions that fluctuate unpredictably. This praxis is reflected today in the many laws and processes that evolve with our society. As complicated as they may seem in all their ramifications, they essentially boil down to our constant desire to harmonize human relations within our society in avoidance of chaos and division, which ultimately lead to destruction.

This innate fear of destruction and breakdown of our social environment (our only means of survival in the natural world) is reflected in our rituals. Freemasonry solidifies and ritualizes these precepts as a means to remind the brethren of these simple and basic realities, far from the distractions of the virtual and mediatized environment in which we evolve. Our concepts of truth and freedom *de facto* eliminate these fears, be they fears of social breakdown, of divine or social retribution from our peers. Truth is undeniable and therefore non-condemning, and this truth in all simplicity binds Freemasons in a covenant that shields our fraternity from the attacks of ignorance, fanaticism, one-tracked ideas and the agendas of political affiliations and organized dogmas. This eliminates all satellite social constructs that might interfere with the ancient practice of ritual that symbolizes the setting in stone of our ideals but yet remains progressive with the current zeitgeist. ■

*Readers are encouraged to forward other viewpoints to editor@freemasonry.bcy.ca*



**142nd Annual COMMUNICATION**

freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2013

**Hilton Vancouver Metrotown Hotel**  
20 - 22 June 2013  
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# Not to be overlooked

by MW Bro. Stephen Godfrey

As each year passes in our jurisdiction, much of what we had as printed material is moving onto our website and becoming electronic files and documents. We see conversion from printed material to electronic files at the lodge and Grand Lodge level. A group of our membership—possibly as high as 25%—are caught in this changeover. Some long serving members are missing out. They do not have 'electronic gadgets.'

In June our *Masonic Bulletin*, after 76 years of publications, will move to an electronic format. Our *Grand Lodge Directory* moved to an electronic format in 2009 after 13 years of printing, and our *Annual Proceedings* has also moved to an electronic format as of 2009 after 138 years in print. All lodges have converted their communications to an electronic format, and secretaries cognizant of the needs of their memberships, have continued to inform members with a communication being sent either electronically, or via Canada Post, to accommodate the change over.

The brother responsible for sick and visiting in a lodge could be the conduit to include the general welfare of these members who do not have computers, to keep them connected. Consider changing the committee's title from "Sick and Visiting" to "Masonic Outreach."

Under this title, all assistance can be accommodated.

Someone—perhaps a job for a Past Master—needs to ensure that all our brethren are still looked after—always and all ways. Assisting brethren to receive all communications is more than important; it is part of our obligation. The *Masonic Bulletin* can continue to be read by all Freemasons in the jurisdiction. A directory will keep them informed of Grand Lodge officers, lodges, secretaries, and committee memberships.

And if they require a copy of the *Proceedings*, all that is required is to inform our Grand Secretary and he will ensure that a hard copy is printed and sent to them.

No one will be overlooked. No one will be left behind. (Thanks to W Bro. Dan Zrymiak for the idea of "Masonic Outreach").

MW Bro. Stephen Godfrey is chairman of the ad hoc Committee on Organizational Analysis and Evaluation.

## A travelling man

By Bro. Christopher Greenfield

As a new Freemason, I was at first timid when my lodge brothers encouraged masonic visits—but I didn't join Freemasonry to sit at home and be a shy brother. With persistence and enthusiasm, I soon grew out of my shell and started feeling more confident on my new masonic legs.

In my short time as a Freemason I have learnt that not only does visitation help us strengthen the bonds we have already established, it allows us



## GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY MAY 2013

4	S	Meeting	Royal Order of Scotland	Vancouver
9	Th	Grand Lodge	Board of General Purposes	Vancouver
9	Th	Crab Night	Joppa 112	White Rock
10-11	F-S	Shrine	Spring Ceremonial	Vernon
21	T	<b>District 11</b>	Whitehorse 46	Whitehorse
22	W	Empire Night	Alliance 193	Vancouver
25	S	<b>District 3</b>	Mount St. Paul 109	Kamloops
27	M	Grand Chapter	Order of the Eastern Star	Kamloops
28	T	<b>District 4N</b>	Vanderhoof 119	Vanderhoof

to create new relationships with our fellow brethren. In becoming known to other lodges we are in fact building relationships that will last a lifetime. This is an invaluable asset found within Freemasonry.

I am a member of Alliance Lodge No. 193 and to back up my position I will use our First Annual King Arthur's Round Table event as an example. We had a great turnout from brethren all across the mainland. Capilano Lodge, in particular, came out to support with not just one or two brethren but ten. If it had not been for their efforts we would have had enough food left over to feed a small army. We felt honoured that all the visitors made the journey out to Kerrisdale lodge hall and for that we are forever grateful. The event was a success. It was a fantastic example of brotherly love.

This brings me to my last point: brotherhood. Travelling promotes solidarity in the brotherhood, not just within districts, but in our jurisdiction and at large, for Freemasonry worldwide. So the next time

you may be thinking twice about visiting another lodge, take a moment to ponder how you feel when you're surrounded by your fellow brothers. When I leave a lodge meeting, whether my own or one I visit, I always feel energized and happier than I was before the meeting. It is a great reminder that I am not alone.

Furthermore, it is a positive environment where knowledge is shared and fellowship is celebrated, making us stronger, better, and more intelligent men.

## Editor needed

The Grand Secretary has announced that the final edition of the *Bulletin* in print form will be June 2013. He is seeking the services of an editor for an electronic version of the *Bulletin* and invites those interested to contact him. The current editor, VW Bro. Trevor W. McKeown, has cheerfully donated his skills since 1998 and now wishes to return to other projects.

## Nota bene

### Section R158 Book of Constitutions

The Masonic Medal of Merit, Dennis Marsh Medal and honorary jewel of the Order of Royal Arch shall be worn on the right lapel. The Lewis jewel is worn on the left breast.