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Charting your course

by RW Bro. J. Alan Cross, Junior Grand Warden

To know where you are going, you have to know where you have come from.

To quote George Santayana "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it,"

Recently my wife Moya and I took a cruise to Alaska, which we enjoyed immensely. We were invited to be with the captain and officers on the bridge on many occasions, and have learned a little from these experiences.

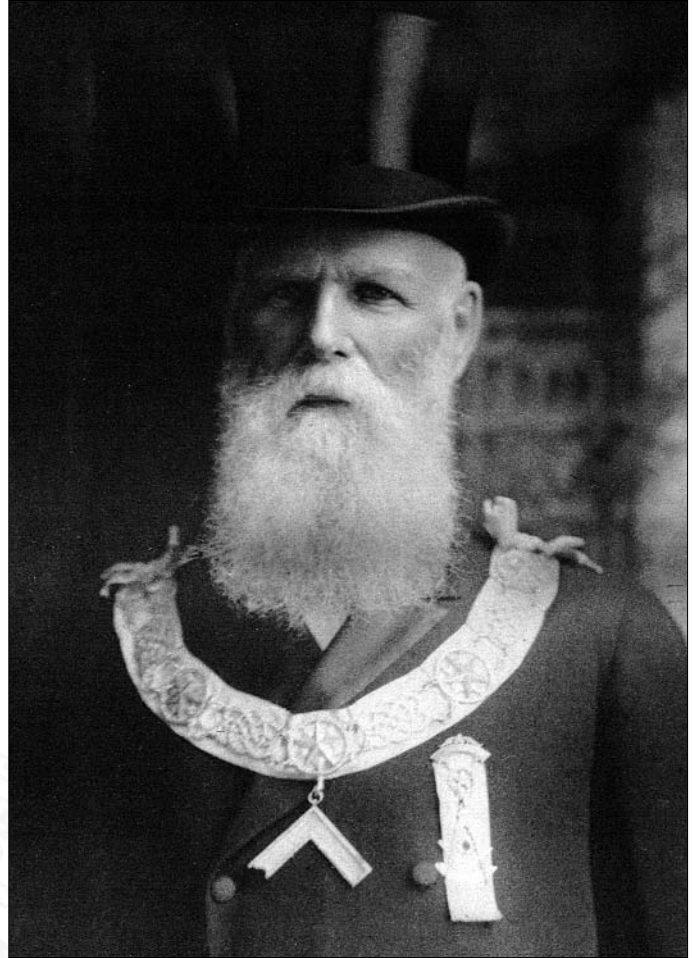
When you take a voyage, whether it is a short or long one, unless you are on the bridge navigating the vessel, you generally take everything for granted. You take for granted the departure; that there will be enough fuel to get you to where you're headed; and that there are qualified officers and crew to take you there not only safely, but via the calmest waters.

Well before a ship's voyage begins, the cruise ship company has had the ship built, crewed

and provisioned, and plotted its course. No, the master of the ship just doesn't get up in the morning and decide where he wants to go that day.

All well-governed vessels have a plan sketched out months or years in advance, then plotted prior to departure taking into account weather, tides, currents, and other factors. In today's world, the high cost of fuel is another important item taken into account.

As the vessel travels, the bridge officers not only follow the routes planned by the company but also the directions of the captain and senior officers. For every course alteration, an officer plots on a chart the actual speed, course, and time/date. Periodically, the officer of the watch will take a fix to ensure that the ship is on course. While sextants and compasses were the primary tools of yesteryear, and shooting the sun or moon was a frequently used technique,



Storekeeper for the Yukon and White Pass Railway during the Klondike gold rush, and real estate developer in North Vancouver, RW Bro. David Gemmell Dick (1846-1920) served a term as president of the local Board of Trade, and attained the distinction of being the bard of the St. Andrews and Caledonian Society of North Vancouver. In 1908 he served as the founding Worshipful Master of Burrard Lodge No. 50.

global positioning systems are now the order of the day. Nonetheless, knowing where you are, and where you've come from is essential to know where you're headed.

In Freemasonry, how often do we sit down and plan our course or route, or know where we are, let alone know where we are going?

Whether it is our Grand

Lodge undertaking strategic or long term planning, or influencing our Craft lodges to do likewise, it is critical going forward to avoid hitting the rocks, running out of fuel, or encountering unnecessary storms along the way.

We hope that our Worshipful Masters don't just get up in the morning and

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Charting your course

from page one

decide where the lodge is going today. We trust that at the very least there is forethought by the officers and brethren—using what skills they bring to the lodge—so they can benefit the Craft, and keep it on track. If the lodge or Grand Lodge is not doing this, they are running the risk of meeting with disaster.

In British Columbia and Yukon, the annual reports of our District Deputy Grand Masters provide some insight into where each lodge is going. Having said that, frequent reviews of the progress of the individual lodges should be undertaken by the Masters and Wardens as a routine part of their duties.

Our Grand Lodge Executive, a couple of years ago, set up our Five Pillar Strategic Plan, a long term plan which was adopted by the Craft at our Grand Lodge Annual Communication in 2007. This plan is for the Grand Jurisdiction of British Columbia and Yukon, but in some cases has been adopted by lodges for the betterment of themselves.

The Plan encompasses Leadership, Education, Communication, Membership and Community.

LEADERSHIP—where we look to develop and maintain competent and committed leaders.

EDUCATION—where we hope to expand our knowledge of Freemasonry, society and the liberal arts and sciences.

COMMUNICATION—where we will disperse all information and resources clearly, effectively and in a timely manner.

MEMBERSHIP—where we strive to retain current members and attract new candidates.

COMMUNITY—where our focus is to develop a meaningful relationship with our communities.

Our measurements of the

success in each of these items will be accomplished by various means including our DDGM annual reports, lodge annual returns, and other means.

How do we accomplish our plan? Putting it in writing is the way to start. Then establishing benchmarks to measure by.

For instance, under membership we need to be aggressive in our approach to any inquiries from interested men seeking admission. While I am not saying we should open the doors to all comers, it is necessary for not only keeping our organization *status quo* in regard to numbers, but to grow to make it again the most important fraternal organization in the world. While we cannot solve all the problems of the declining numbers at the Grand Lodge level, we can and should emphasize programmes which will assist the individual lodges in gaining and maintaining membership. Ideas such as “bring a friend night”, or advertising for a “few good men” in the local media are just two. While we are encouraging our lodges to bring in more members, we must make sure that when men join a lodge they aren’t disappointed in what they find. Coming into lodge only to hear the minutes of the previous meeting, and bills and accounts being read and passed, will surely drive younger members out.

Providing more and better education programmes, more and better social events, perhaps with the new brethren’s significant other, will enhance membership.

Only by emphasizing membership will we find new leaders. We tend to burn out a lot of our brethren, by loading them with more and more work. We need to spread out the work in the lodges to a wider base of brethren. Getting the younger or newer brethren involved is a two-fold, positive thing. One, it makes the masonic experience that much more rewarding, and two,

spreading the load takes away the overload which we often find in our lodges. Likewise in Grand Lodge, we need to find and utilize more brethren in our undertakings.

Did I mention education? Education, or Information, is often overlooked in lodges. Our Grand Master two years ago suggested in British Columbia and Yukon that this item be placed early in a lodge’s agenda, to ensure that the brethren are still awake and interested, and gain something from it.

Now to the item which I feel is so vital in any organization, but more especially this one of ours: communication.

If we don’t utilize all the avenues available to ourselves at the Grand Lodge level, what hope do the lodges have in understanding our messages to them, and communicating them to their memberships.

In this, the twenty-first century—and almost 300 years since the founding of the first Grand Lodge in England—we have such easy methods of communication with one another. Whether it is just the telephone, cell phone, email, faxes, text messaging, or Canada Post, there are no excuses for not keeping the brethren apprised of what is happening within the Brotherhood.

Communication must be of a positive nature. There is nothing as divisive as having someone who is in apparent authority open his mouth at the wrong time and disenfranchise another brother. We must remember our Master Mason’s obligation, in that we will speak well of our brother in his presence as well as in his absence.

I would like to relate to you a little story about a brother—one unfortunately now in the Grand Lodge Above. This Brother, or Worshipful Brother I should say, had just completed his year as Master of his adopted lodge. He was raised

in a lodge in Germany while in the Royal Canadian Air Force. As he was walking down the staircase from lodge to the banquet table, he heard two older, and I’m sure much wiser brothers behind him comment that “that is why we don’t like affiliated brothers to be Master in our lodge.”

Imagine that this had happened to you. Well, my brothers, this Worshipful Brother just kept on walking ... out to his car, only to return when wheeled into the lodge on the last Remembrance Day prior to his death by some brothers who really wanted him to at least come back for that event, knowing he was in his last stages of dying. This negative Communication cost the Craft a good man, a hard working brother, and one who had just contributed one of the best years of his life to his lodge. I imagine that his son and sons-in-law, don’t exactly have a great impression of the Craft to want to seek out a lodge and join it today. I might be wrong, but I don’t think so.

Lastly, while we are a fraternity dedicated to peace, harmony and brotherly love, we need to be seen in the community as such. By hiding within our tyled recesses we encourage those outside the lodges to view with skepticism the claim that we are actually doing anything constructive for our communities. Whether it is a photo opportunity in a local newspaper, or being visible providing bursaries to students, or donations to important sectors of the community we must ramp this up to avoid being swept under the carpet of this century.

Should each lodge buy into this plan, we should not fail, but will prosper for many years to come. We all suffer from the inevitable loss of membership from brethren being promoted to the Grand Lodge Above.

What we do hope is that raisings will overcome this number. We have seen the past

several years where we would have maintained our membership numbers if it weren't for demits and suspensions.

While we don't need to be fixing our position several times a day, we in our Grand Lodge, and in our constituent lodges need not only to be plotting the course, but also knowing the speed we are traveling, and the direction and destination of our cruise. ■

Ashlar College

by RW Bro. Martin Bridges.
Education Committee
Chairman

What is the Ashlar College of Freemasonry

An initiative of the Committee on Education, the College is intended to act as the umbrella for the creation, delivery, and administration of a Masonic Diploma Correspondence course.

Objective

The objective of the Ashlar College of Freemasonry will be to assist in meeting the masonic educational needs of all members of this jurisdiction by creating, compiling, and presenting instructional material suited for that purpose.

This is to be achieved by providing each enrolled student with a three year diploma programme in masonic education consisting of approximately eighteen individual sections and delivered to the student at the rate of six sections per year. The first year course will commence 1 February, 2009.

Upon the satisfactory completion of year one, the student would be entitled to receive a certificate from the College acknowledging his accomplishment and progress to that date. A second year certificate can be obtained by the student as progress is made.

Finally, on the satisfactory completion of year three, the

student would be entitled to, and presented with, his Ashlar College of Freemasonry diploma at an appropriate Grand Lodge Communication.

Qualifying as a student

To qualify as a student in the College the applicant must be a Master Mason in good standing of a lodge currently on the Registry of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.

Delivery of material

In order to keep operating costs to an absolute minimum, all course material will be provided by electronic mail only, with assignments being handled in the same manner. Obtaining suggested reference material, in the form of published books, etc, will be the sole responsibility of the student as it is probable that he may already be in possession of such books and/or see this as an opportunity to develop and add to his own study library.

Cost of instruction

While no dollar amount has yet been set, there will be a set fee for the three year course.

Further information, including an application form, and details on registration and fees will be available 1 December, on the Grand Lodge website: freemasonry.bcy.ca/bc.html. Click on *Member Services* and follow the link to Ashlar College of Freemasonry. ■

Lodge notes

The *Trail Rossland News* reports that, thanks to the initiative and funding of **Fidelity Lodge No. 32**, Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital has been able to offer private family rooms for terminally ill patients and their families since 1985. This autumn the rooms required extensive upgrading and **Corinthian Lodge No. 27** stepped forward with a donation of \$60,000.

Two recent anniversaries

raise the question of who is our jurisdiction's oldest member and who is our senior member. Bro. Allan Norman Cabot, born 24 October 1908, was initiated into **St George's Lodge No. 3758** on 20 September 1930, later affiliating with **Prospect Lodge No. 172**; while Bro. Donat Robert McMahon, born 20 October 1908, was initiated into **Burrard Lodge No. 50** on 7 March 1930. ■

Masonry?

There were four of them in the ante-room besides the Tyler; a Past Master, a Junior Officer, the Oldest Member and a newly raised brother. They had been telling the newly made brother what they could of the Ancient Craft, what he might expect from it and in it, and how he could proceed to get the greatest benefit from it.

When they had finished, he asked: "Tell me, you are old and experienced in Freemasonry, what does it really mean to you?"

The Past Master stopped to weigh his words. "I think it means the chance of being of service to my fellow men.

"I have had the distinguished honour of being selected, at one time, to preside over this lodge. The honour, deserved or not, came because I was willing to serve my fellow members and work for the good of the Order. As I look back on it, I see that readiness to serve was created in me by my feeling of gratitude to the fraternity for what I had received from it. Yet, all that I did receive—friends, good times, instruction and a new idea—came to me from serving. So, in a way, I have to say that a desire to serve came from serving!

"I think every man has a desire to be of use in the world. It may be in the big outside world, or some inner, restricted world; but the desire to serve is the same. And so I find it in Freemasonry—there is a much



Grand Lodge of BC & Yukon 138th Annual Communication

June 18-20, 2009
Prince George

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will open in the new year
freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2009



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greater joy in the actual feeling that one is of use to his fellows, than there is in the honor of being selected as one to lead, for awhile, an organization.

"The lodge to me is place of labour—a place where I can be of some use in the world without thought of reward or hope of any material pay. Yes, I think I can answer your question by saying;

"Freemasonry means to me the chance to be of service."

The Junior Officer took up the conversation.

"To me, Freemasonry means inspiration," he stated. "I am a municipal court judge. My daily work is concerned entirely with the lower, harder, meaner and dirtier side of life. I spend my day with bootleggers, wife-beaters, thieves, sneaks and dope-peddlers. I hear only the sadder sort of stories. If I believed all life was like what I see of it, I wouldn't want to live.

"But, I don't believe it. A very wise old judge, with whom I talked before I went on the bench told me that the most important thing a judge had to do was to keep a sane viewpoint. He said a judge who allowed himself to become warped in his valuation of human beings was not a good judge. Freemasonry is the inspiration that keeps me from allowing what I see, to be, to me, all there is of life.

"In Freemasonry I find only an altruistic viewpoint. There is not, anywhere in Freemasonry a single thing that is selfish. There is in it not a prayer for self. There is in it not a single act which a brother does which is for himself.

"Masonry teaches me that there is good everywhere, in every man, if you only hunt deep enough. Freemasonry never lets me forget that a Perfect Ashlar is made of a Rough Ashlar—that the perfect stone is inside the rough stone all the time, only waiting the cunning hand of the workman to knock away the roughness

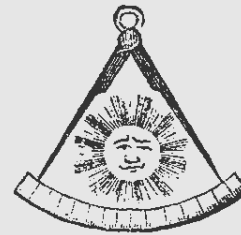
to reveal the perfection underneath. Masonry teaches me there is a perfect ashlar under the rough exteriors I see. So I must answer you, my brother, that to me Masonry means inspiration, a holding constantly before my inner eyes a spiritual ideal, so that I can forget the material wrong and evil which is so rife in the world in which I live."

"Well, I'll agree that Freemasonry may be all things to all men," the Oldest Mason began, seeing that the Junior Officer had finished. "And perhaps you won't think that what Freemasonry means to me is as big and as fine as the opportunity for service that the Past Master sees, and the inspiration that the Junior Officer finds. To me, Freemasonry means the chance to make friends.

"The young man thinks that friends are easy to make, and I dare say many a man thinks he could make them as easily in a club or a board of trade as he could in a lodge. But there is a great difference between the friendships made in profane gatherings, and those which result from meeting on the level.

"As I see it, there must be some sort of mutually shared background for any real friendship. Two men must have something to which both can hold if they are to draw themselves together, against the naturally repellent forces which makes us all suspicious of all the rest of humanity.

"I feel friendly to the new young brother just coming into the lodge because he has won his way against odds, into our charmed circle, and I wish him well. The mere wishing him good luck makes me feel friendly. To the older members, with whom I have stood so many times in lodge prayer, with whom I have joined so many times in degrees, with whom so many times I have visited the sick, attended funerals or enjoyed innocent



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY DECEMBER 2008

10	Wed	District 13	Melrose Lodge No. 67	Vancouver
14	Sun	Church Parade		Vancouver

gaiety at refreshment. I am friendly because of our common interests and feelings.

"I have made, and I think that every good freemason does, some of the best friends in the world, through masonic association. Freemasonry picks her brethren. We are all alike in a few fundamentals, before we become freemasons. So we have an unusual opportunity to make friends in Freemasonry. I think that must stand as my answer to our young brother's question, what freemasonry means to me—an opportunity to make friends.

"Now that our young friend has heard us, I should like to hear what he thinks. What, my brother, does Freemasonry mean to you?" The newly raised brother flushed a little, embarrassed at being called on for an expression of opinion in the presence of those so much older and wiser in the Craft.

"It's all so new to me," he answered, hesitating a little.

"I am quite willing to take your several interpretations of Freemasonry and its meaning. But so far none of you has mentioned what it is to me: the opportunity which Freemasonry gives. To me, Masonry means a chance to learn. I have been instructed that I should study the seven liberal arts and sciences, and the several degrees all put a good deal of stress on the teachings of Freemasonry.

"I have read one or two books which hint at a great deal that is concealed, much

more than is revealed. It seems to me that the world of study and information which Freemasonry opens up to her initiates is her greatest boon. I find a great many different interpretations of masonic symbols. Unless I conclude that some are right and some are wrong, a symbol must have many meanings. Yet only one is given in the degree. That must mean that it is intended that I study them, and dig into them for myself, and try to find all the various meanings. I think Freemasonry means to me, at least so far, an opportunity to increase my knowledge."

"We haven't heard from the Tyler yet!" The Past Master turned to the guardian of the door. "What does Freemasonry mean to you?"

"You've all wasted a lot of words to say something you all mean!" responded the Tyler. "One of you thinks Freemasonry means service, another thinks it means inspiration, and another thinks it means friends, and still another thinks it means knowledge. They all come from the same source. And that is what Freemasonry really means.

"You have overlooked what is to me the most significant symbols. If Freemasonry means service, and friends, and inspiration, and knowledge; what else can you say it means, except just the Great Architect?"

Excerpted from What Masonry Means by Carl Claudy. Short Talk Bulletin, vol. v no. 5 (May, 1927)