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Charting your masonic course

by MW Bro. J. Alan Cross

I am but a simple man, who has tried hard to walk the walk as a freemason for most of my life. Like a lot of you, I want to give back to my fraternity whatever I can, and will work diligently to that end through what will surely be the most memorable year of my life.

DVD project

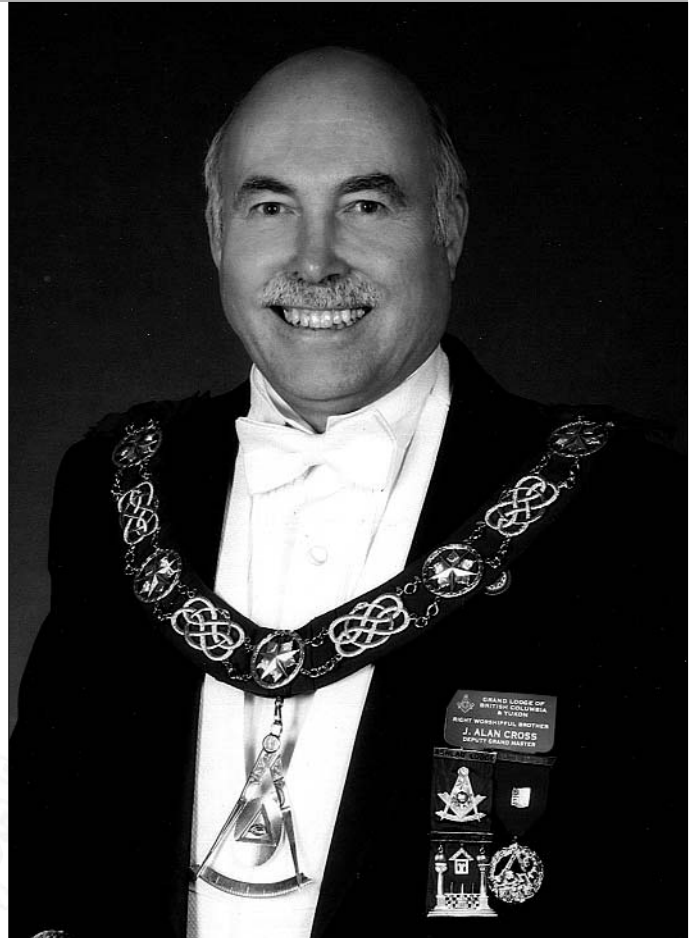
We are living in age suffused with media messages. The techniques for communicating change by the day. As freemasons, how are we communicating? How are we relating our love for the Craft in ways that many can understand?

During MW Bro. Stephen Godfrey's year as Grand Master, the Grand Line discussed creating a new DVD. During MW Bro. Allen's year work was begun, and with the blessing of MW Bro. Tuckey most of the work is already completed. MW Bro. Godfrey was the team leader, and got the ball rolling.

Our new DVD, entitled *Freemasonry "The Journey*

Begins", is directed specifically at those seeking information about Freemasonry in our jurisdiction. It replaces a video prepared by our Grand Lodge in 1996. When the committee first met more than two years ago to undertake this project one priority became very clear from the outset: the need for quality. The new DVD had to be professional, of broadcast quality, and targeted especially to the man of today and his family. Fortunately, the committee brought together professional broadcasters, film makers and other freemasons connected with the motion picture industry, as well as skilled and experienced brethren. The finished DVD will be about twenty minutes long, and will be available to all lodges and brethren.

Remember, this production was not developed simply to please ourselves. The video does, however, reveal heartfelt stories and testimonials told by our very own brethren within



MW Bro. J. Alan Cross, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon for 2010-2011.

our jurisdiction.

As some of you know, the budget approved at this year's Annual Communication provides only \$5000 for a Grand Master's project. Realizing that the costs to create a DVD would far exceed this, I contacted several lodges and building societies to request financial assistance. My sincere thanks to those who have generously provided funding for this initiative. The cost will approach \$30,000 and without your support, would

have been impossible. I wish to thank Concord Lodge No. 79 in Parksville, Kamloops Masonic Temple Association, Richmond Lodge No. 142, the Pioneers from Victoria and Mountain Lodge No. 11 in Golden for their generous support. I realize that you recognized that this is a worthwhile project and thank you so much for putting your faith in me in having it carried out.

Our hope is that if this DVD spurs some men to seek us out

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Grand Master's message from page one

and join our fraternity then it will have been well worth the effort. We had one side effect, which we were not expecting. Our primary cameraman was a non-mason, chosen by our producer for his skills and abilities to assist us. This man was so impressed with the brethren he met during the interview process, he petitioned, was accepted and is now Bro. Gary Turcotte, an Entered Apprentice freemason from Vancouver & Quadra Lodge No. 2. Amazing!

As well, kudos to MW Bro. Godfrey and his committee, including Bro. John Almond, Bro. Keith Beardwood, RW Bro. Doug Franklin as well as those non-masons who greatly assisted in this project.

Five Pillar Plan

Your Grand Lodge has a Five Pillar Plan which continues to be a living document. We sincerely hope that by using this tool that our Grand Lodge will prosper for many years to come. We determined that the plan would be the responsibility of the Senior Grand Warden. This year I am appointing a sub-committee to the Board of General Purposes styled the Strategic Planning Committee, with the Senior Grand Warden as its chairman. I will shortly be appointing three of your Grand Lodge Regional Representatives to assist him.

Charting your masonic course

My theme this year is: "Charting your masonic course." I have had struck a lapel pin with a compass rose surmounted by the square and compasses. Its message is *planning*. Not just planning, but strategic and long term planning. We have undertaken this at the Grand Lodge level over the past few years, and now it is time that all lodges, from Victoria to Dawson City, get involved. My thanks to MW Bro. Santy Loscano, the Grand

Master of Washington, who assisted greatly in the creation of this pin.

Committees

This past year MW Bro. Tuckey formed an *ad hoc* committee on Insurance. This year I am asking that this committee continue and investigate the possibility of having a group insurance policy available for all lodges, building societies and companies. Firstly, to see if we can save money, but secondly to perhaps standardize the coverage we need and want. This I understand has been done in the Grand Lodge of Quebec with good success.

MW Bro. Tuckey also formed the Committee on Organizational Analysis under the chairmanship of MW Bro. Stephen Godfrey. I am most pleased to continue with this initiative, and am confident that next year at this time there will be a report and some recommendations for improvement in your Grand Lodge.

This year our Board of General Purposes, under the chairmanship of Deputy Grand Master RW Bro. William R. Cave, will meet in several locations around our jurisdiction. A meeting was held in August at Quesnel; and others will be held in October at Kamloops, January at Victoria and May at Vancouver. I invite all brethren to come, to observe, and see what your Grand Lodge does the rest of the year.

Initiatives

I have some initiatives for this year, which hopefully will be continued for the next couple of years. I have worked with our new Deputy Grand Master and Senior Grand Warden to put forth some ideas which will continue the work initiated by our Immediate Past Grand Master, and others before him.

Membership is absolutely critical for continued success in our fraternity. I am concerned that even though we need to

appear to be more approachable by those outside the fraternity we must be vigilant in guarding the west gate, ensuring that we are only admitting men of quality. In this regard our Grand Secretary has just completed a review of our standard petition form. I now wish to ensure that all lodges are utilizing it, and as such I am directing him to do this. It is essential that every candidate for membership be interviewed in his home and, hopefully, with his partner present. We must be pro-active and follow procedures!

To aid lodges in bringing back members who have been dropped from our rolls for non-payment of dues, I am proclaiming an amnesty programme for one year and am having our Grand Secretary drop reinstatement fees for this period. I also ask that any unpaid dues owed will be overlooked by each lodge. On a similar note, go through your records and see if you can bring back in dimitted men. If this will spur getting lapsed members back into the Craft, it will be worth it! I don't believe it is easy, so I ask each lodge to either form a committee or ask their secretary to spearhead this. Write a letter, make a phone call, knock on a door. Please try to do your part. But one side comment to this. If you bring a brother back into your lodge, don't leave him alone to become bored and leave again; get him involved in Freemasonry and in turn he will be rewarded tenfold. I will be asking our newly installed Junior Grand Warden to focus on membership this year, and have asked him to report to the Board of General Purposes of our successes and failures. Likewise he will report to Grand Lodge at Langley next June.

I am looking for some good, able men to revamp our Community Relations Committee and assist us in letting the world at large know of our great fraternity.

The students of today are our future. We have a great Bursary Fund, which might just be another of our hidden mysteries. I have appointed a new chairman and trustees, and we encourage you to be more in touch with what they do. We hope that our DDGMs or other officers will be able to assist in the presentation of these awards around the jurisdiction, and get some media attention in the process. I firmly believe that this is one of the most important things we can do. While I will be looking at other charitable projects this year, my main focus will be our Bursary Fund. We need to build it up, and use the funds wisely.

Some time ago I came across the phrase "no more secrets." I thought it catchy, especially when we are considered by many to be a secret society. We know that we are but a fraternity, not just a fraternity but the world's biggest and best — but one of our biggest secrets is that many men have no clue about us. Now, I'm not encouraging our Craft to open the doors of our lodges to all comers, but to get the word out to the general public that we are the world's best fraternity, and encourage men of all faiths to come and learn about us. And if they find something they like, to petition for membership. One other secret I find in this and other jurisdictions is the location of our lodge buildings and when the we meet. We need to be proactive in providing signage, and putting the welcome mat out for our brethren.

In my travels down under I discovered something called "rebranding" At the present time we are known by our formal name of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of British Columbia and Yukon. Consider using "Freemasons of British Columbia and Yukon." It is simpler and to the point and fits in easier in telling who we

are. You will note that my lapel pin has this embossed on it.

On my visits around this jurisdiction, I look forward to meeting with as many members as possible. In every case, where a visit takes place on an evening, I hope to have coffee and conversation "on the level" the morning after—to discuss whatever is on your mind in an informal atmosphere.

On a very serious note, your Grand Lodge executive, through legal counsel, has continued to deal with our Past Grand Master, who commenced legal action several years ago against a number of named brethren, as well as the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon itself. This is a fact. We are named as defendants. We continue to hope that this action will be either withdrawn or dismissed. We are not so naïve as to believe that this will be easily done. In this regard, until this legal action has been resolved, I hereby continue the suspension from Freemasonry of MW Bro. William Unrau.

I also give fair warning to all concerned that malicious emails or letters will not be tolerated. Remember our foundations: brotherly love, relief and truth. As well, remember your obligations concerning defending a brother's good name in his absence as well as in his presence. ■

Lodge notes

This past spring the brethren of **Manoah Lodge No. 18** were so impressed by the election of Ms Arielle Alexander-Gordon as the Supreme Bethel Honoured Queen that they were moved to donate \$1,100 to the Order of Job's Daughters as its 2010 special project in recognition of the centenary of Canada's Navy.

For the eleventh year **Rainbow Lodge No. 180**, in

Port Hardy, organized a competition for young anglers in conjunction with the annual Filomi (Fishing / Logging / Mining) Days in July. ■

Balloting

by Paul M. Bessel,

A basic principle in Freemasonry is to be respectful and fair to everyone. In fact, this is fundamental to why Freemasonry was founded and why it exists. Brethren should respect each other, and this includes our words, our actions, our appearance and even our thoughts. Inside the lodge and outside of it, we should strive to demonstrate in every way our respect for a brother's honour, feelings, efforts, hopes and any other part of his life that we may contact.

Many freemasons believe that the current method of balloting on candidates for the degrees or for affiliation is the only possible method, and that it has always been used in Freemasonry. The idea of complete secrecy of how each freemason balloted, and the need for complete unanimity for an affirmative vote, are thought to be essential to promote harmony in the lodge. But does it promote harmony to allow one member of the lodge to reject not only a single candidate, but also the opinions of all those who signed their names as sponsors of the candidate plus all the members of the investigating committee that approved the candidate?

Even if occasionally both the secrecy and the unanimity may seem to work a hardship on a man apparently worthy of being taken by the hand as a brother, the occasional failure of the system to work complete justice may be laid to the individuals using it and not to the Fraternity. The brother who casts a ballot, then, upon an applicant, wields a tremendous power.

Has the current system been

successful in keeping out those who are quarrelsome, gossip-mongers, or vain and boastful?

The current system allows, even encourages, the use of the ballot for personal vendettas. In fact, a recent *Short Talk Bulletin* that defends the system describes an actual case where a man blackballed a candidate four times, but the candidate was accepted after the blackballer moved away. The candidate turned out to be one of the best members of the lodge, yet the ballot procedure could have kept him out of Freemasonry forever.

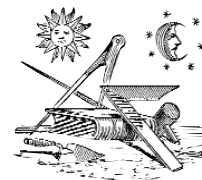
An ill-used black cube—and no one can deny that this occurs,—"crushes ... him who casts it," and "drops into the heart and blackens it." Therefore, isn't there a better way to ballot?

Secrecy of the ballot?

According to *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, "there is little evidence of a secret ballot until well along in the eighteenth century, and there was probably no ballot-box or other safeguard of a private ballot until the nineteenth."

What masonic purposes are served by the current balloting procedures? The purpose of the petition and the ballot is to get qualified men into the Craft and to keep unqualified men out, and any reasonable procedure directed to that end is good Freemasonry. Our current ballot procedures allow dozens or even hundreds of members of a lodge who may be extremely enthusiastic about a petitioner to have their desires blocked by one member, who may not even have any substantial reason for his position. Even if those jurisdictions where it takes three or some other number of black cubes to reject a candidate, there is still some perceived good in allowing those who vote negatively to keep their reasons secret from their brethren. What is that perceived "good reason"?

Bernard E. Jones pointed



Freemasonry:
the art and science
of right living



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of BRITISH COLUMBIA and
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at night?

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a daylight
lodge!

Dogwood Lodge No. 192
Third Saturday
Meridian Lodge No. 108
Second Saturday

out that in German and French lodges, those voting against candidates identify themselves and their reasons to the Master, who has the authority to determine that those reasons are frivolous. In some jurisdictions it is open for the whole lodge to see how a brother casts his vote.

Still, Jones came out in favour of secret balloting.

As was pointed out in a *Philaethes* magazine article in 1989: "Today, in the huge traffic snarl of the cities, no one knows the candidate. So in long, boring sessions we ballot and give one man the full right to blackball and hide himself in a box. The tyranny of one man is hidden in secrecy and never to be disputed, because he is supposed to know more than the unanimous vote of all his brethren. No tyrant in history could ever work with such secrecy."

How can we say that Freemasonry promotes democracy when we continue such a system? Allen E. Roberts wrote an article showing exactly how the ballot procedures allow one man in a lodge to "teach a lesson" to petitioners by rejecting everyone the first time to see if they care enough to petition again. Petitioners are also rejected because one lodge member is upset that "his" candidate was rejected, so he rejects others out of spite.

Others have mentioned a distinguished armed forces veteran who was rejected from Freemasonry because one brother thought only an enemy spy or a communist could have been captured and then escaped, as he had.

Are these actions that promote the masonic morality we talk about? What purposes are served by the way we currently allow ballot boxes to be used, "other than protecting tyrants and cowards." We say masonic brothers respect each other. Then why do we say that a brother can blackball a

candidate without having the respect for his brethren to tell them why? His reason may be good or bad, but why not say what it is to his brethren? Perhaps the brother is opposed to a candidate or affiliate as the result of a misunderstanding, such as confusion over a name. This has happened. If this were brought into the open, it could be cleared up quickly. As *Coil's* says, referring to unfair attacks on Freemasonry as a secret society in words that could also apply to our current balloting methods, "The best way to preserve a falsity is to keep it secret; the best way to establish a truth is to expose it to the light."

And affiliations?

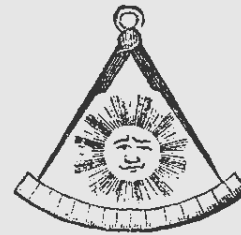
As Allen Roberts and others have pointed out, what is the logic behind balloting on those who are already Master Masons seeking to affiliate with another lodge?

How can anyone say that a Master Mason against whom no charges have been filed is not morally eligible to join another lodge? In 1948, some states allowed for a vote of four-fifths, rather than unanimity in voting for affiliation petitions.

Allen E. Roberts, suggested, "Let the presiding officer ask: 'Does anyone have an objection to the petitioner?' If there are no objections, the petitioner should be declared elected. If there are objections hold over the petition for further — legitimate — investigation."

We often decide critical questions about the existence of lodges with open discussion and voting, so why can't similar procedures be used to vote on petitioners, which is generally a routine matter? Some may feel this is too drastic a change in our ballot procedures.

The Grand Lodge of Wisconsin offers a compromise. If a black cube is in the ballot box, the Master announces that whoever has a valid reason for rejecting the petitioner must tell the Master, in private, within 48



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY SEPTEMBER 2010

17 F	Grand Chapter	Royal Arch	Chilliwack
18 S	Zarah Temple	Ceremonial Daughters of the Nile	Burnaby
19 Su	Miriam Temple	Ceremonial Daughters of the Nile	Victoria
25 S	District 9	Kootenay Lodge No. 15	Revelstoke

hours. If no one comes forward, the petitioner is elected. If a reason is given, the reason is transmitted to the Grand Master, who sends a written decision to the lodge about whether the reason is a valid, masonic one.

The identity of the objector can remain a secret, if that is thought to be useful. Only the reason he gave would become known.

Even in a lodge, perhaps especially in a masonic lodge where everyone is supposed to have pledged himself to a higher standard of morality, when a ballot is cast "not for reasons of morality or fitness, but as a tool of bigotry and prejudice, the ballot loses its sacred character and is properly subject to cancellation." Another suggestion, made by an author of an article in *The Philaethes* magazine, is to have the Master and the two Wardens, those who have been elected by the lodge to be trusted to guide it, constitute a committee to vote on petitions. Any member could attend their meetings to offer advice, based on evidence, thus avoiding boring lodge procedures and eliminating the opportunity for unfair tactics.

In Freemasonry, we want to be among friends, among those we know will always treat us and everyone else with respect and fairness, no matter what we are discussing or doing, no matter what our

differences might be.

Freemasonry and justice must become synonyms. We need to raise the level of civility in all our masonic activities to a higher level, to live by the Golden Rule, to promote the romance of Freemasonry, and to bring about true brotherhood.

To accomplish that, perhaps we should start discussing whether our current balloting procedures help accomplish masonic objectives or whether they detract from them. ■

Value

In 1867 Cariboo Lodge No. 469 established its initiation fees at \$100 for the three degrees and annual dues at \$24. That would make the initiation fees equal \$1,500 in today's dollars, using the Consumer Price Index, or the equivalent of \$11,800 using the equivalent unskilled wage. Annual dues today would be \$359 using the Consumer Price Index, or \$2,840 using the unskilled wage. While many at the time were making their fortunes in the goldfields, many more were barely eking out a living. The lodge took this into account and allowed the initiation fees to be paid in three installments with the conferral of degrees, and the annual dues to be paid at \$2 per month.

And what is your Freemasonry worth to you? ■