



H.J. DeForest, landscape artist 1
It's decision time1
Charity refined2
DeMolay reunion 2
Lodge notes 2
Freemasonry and religion 2
Return to Normandy 4
Our Grand Master's itinerary..... 4

It's decision time

Statistics Canada recently released some data that should give all freemasons a good reason for some serious decisions.

This year, British Columbia was hit with the country's highest increase in average undergraduate fees for the second consecutive year. Fees are up 30.4% on top of last year's 25.7% hike—or an average of \$4,140 for university students, surpassing the national average of \$4,025. Kwantlen's fees went up 30% to an average of \$3,000.

University students who live away from home spend \$13,000 a year on tuition, food, rent, clothing and transportation. Those living at home, between \$3,500 and \$4,500 for the eight-month academic year—college students slightly less. Do the math: four years at \$13,000 a year equals \$62,000—beyond even the best summer jobs and most parental help.

Family income has a direct bearing on whether young

people continue their education, and the middle class family is the hardest hit by these increased costs and student loan rules. In fact, only 58% of children from families of \$55,000 income, are able to continue. The requirement to contribute to the financial-aid system is somewhat unrealistic—resulting in many appeals. Only one quarter of families earning less than \$25,000 are able to save toward their children's education, and the median savings—\$2,000—doesn't even cover the cost of tuition for one child for one year. Only 15% of post-secondary students receive scholarships or awards to cover their costs.

There are many other official statistics that could be quoted here, but they all lead up to the fact that we must decide, as a society, whether higher education is a right or a privilege. And the freemasons of this jurisdiction need to do some diligent soul searching in this regard. Last year, your



A well-known artist of his day, W Bro. Henry Josiah DeForest (1855-1924) travelled to Vancouver from Saint John, New Brunswick, by way of England, France, Italy, Egypt, Palestine, Germany, Switzerland, Australia and Tasmania. First secretary of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association in 1894 and an exhibiting member of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, he was also the first secretary of the Vancouver Museum. From 1905 till 1912 he was the curator of the Vancouver Museum and during this time, in 1910, he tried to establish a masonic museum in Vancouver, without success. His painting of Mount Hermon Lodge's lodgehall currently hangs in the Library at Grand Lodge. An active freemason, DeForest affiliated with Cascade Lodge No. 12, Vancouver, on 16 October, 1893, from Shakespeare Lodge No. 124, Victoria, Australia. He passed away on 23 March, 1924, in Calgary, Alberta and is buried in the masonic section of Mountain View Cemetery in Vancouver—sharing a gravestone with MW Bro. William Carey Ditmars, our Grand Master for 1915-1916.

Bursary Trustees were able to award 106 bursaries of \$750 to deserving students—but 75 equally deserving students were denied awards because of insufficient funds. And you may

recall that several years ago, Grand Lodge went on record with an established goal of \$1,000 bursaries.

In all likelihood, the year

continued on page 2



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It's decision time from page one

2004 will see a considerable increase over last year's 181 bursary applications. So, you can see the problem confronting our Bursary Trustees. We are in dire need of an increase in funds to assist the young people of the province with their educational requirements. The future of British Columbia and the Yukon, and of its freemasons, can be favourably affected by our actions in this regard. Please consider increasing your tax-free donations to the Bursary Fund before April 30th.

Charity

by W Bro. Norman K. Lee

Every one of us when first making acquaintance with Freemasonry, was exhorted in very strong terms to be cautious in our behaviour. Let us then apply this caution even in our thoughts, and by so doing cultivate a more charitable feeling towards our fellow-men, for by this means the world cannot but gain, and the peace which we all hope for, and look forward to, will be so much nearer attainment.

May I remind you that the laws of Freemasonry are very strict as to the conduct of the brethren in open lodge and when any question is under discussion, any disturbance or

departure from the rule of patient hearing is contrary to masonic law ; the rules laid down for the conduct of the brethren in lodge are founded upon and in accordance with, the great law of Charity, which as good freemasons we should at all times strictly observe, and such rules ought to guide us not only in lodge, but in all situations outside of the lodge.

To be charitable in speech does not imply insincerity and flattery, but rather a due care for truth. We so often speak harshly of another's actions, having no real knowledge of the circumstances which gave rise to them ; without such knowledge of another's action we are not able to judge fairly. The spirit of charity involves a readiness to be generous in speaking of others, a willingness to impute good motives and to excuse where one cannot approve.

The masonic symbol of Charity is the figure of a young woman with an open and benevolent countenance, carrying an infant in her left arm and with two other young children clinging to her, one of whom is holding her right hand and bearing a pleading look upon its face. These are to signify that tender care of the helpless and that readiness to minister to their wants, which so essentially belong to Charity.

The figure of Charity is represented as standing on a rough ashlar, suggestive of the harshness and bitterness which it ought to be our endeavour to remove, but the present existence of which in our neighbours Charity wishes us to disregard, so far as not to allow them to interfere with our desire to do them good.

Reprinted from the Transactions of The Lodge of Research, No. 2429, Leicester, UK, for the year 1925-26, p. 47

DeMolay

British Columbia DeMolay will be hosting an Alumni

Banquet and Ball in April. Details have yet to be finalized but it promises to be great event. They are looking to gather as many Senior DeMolays to invite to this event, so if you were involved in DeMolay as a member, advisor or supporter, please contact Rob Gagne at 604-521-1771, email: robgagne@telus.net

Dear Editor,

May I bring to your attention the difficulties facing the younger Master Mason and Past Master in attending the Grand Lodge sessions traditionally scheduled for the third week in June.

For the freemason with school-age children there is a conflict of dates regarding school graduations and Grand Lodge sessions. Not only do Grade 12 students and parents participate in graduation ceremonies but these ceremonies have been extended down through the lower grades. The younger freemasons are our future and it is important that they have the same opportunity to attend Grand Lodge as freemasons with no school age children.

I understand that if our Grand Lodge Annual Communication was moved from the third week of June to the last Friday and Saturday of June it may cause scheduling problems with other masonic bodies, but the future of our Grand Lodge and younger freemasons in particular is of paramount importance.

*Respectfully and fraternally,
W Bro. Martin Bridges
Comox Lodge No. 188.*

Lodge notes

This past September was full of excitement for **Kamloops Lodge No. 10** First, on 9

September, a visitor from Australia was passing through the city on his way to Calgary and the Eastern States, and upon seeing the building, decided to visit that evening—despite the long flight to Vancouver and drive to Kamloops. On examination he proved to be MW Bro. Carl Stewart, Immediate Past Grand Master of the State of Victoria, Australia. He was introduced in lodge by MW Bro. Jack Harper, and proved to be a gracious guest. RW Bro. Bill Fowler of **Cayoosh Lodge No. 173** presented him with a giant cucumber that he just happen to have brought with him, as a remembrance of his visit. This was received in good spirit.

On 14 September, the first Annual Dale Dickson Memorial Golf Tournament , Barbeque and Silent Auction was held. A great turn out raised over \$1,300 for the Cancer Car Project.

Masonry and religion

by MW Bro. William C. Rheubottom, Grand Master MW Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington, F&AM

Freemasonry has never looked for detractors. Enemies of the organization have included the Roman Catholic Church, the Communist Party, the Nazis, and the religious right. It has been denounced by popes and kings, by the ignorant and by those who felt threatened by the fraternity's reputation for secrecy.

Unfortunately, because it has a long history of never answering critics, Freemasonry makes a wonderful target for bigotry.

I've lost count of how many times I have been asked, "Isn't Freemasonry a separate religion?" It is a question that creates a question: "How in the world did anyone come to



This world gives one
the finest chance
Some persons comfort
to advance.

W Bro. Palmer Cox

believe that Freemasonry is a religion?" The basic question has been addressed over and over again: "No, Freemasonry is not a religion."

But, this reply rarely has any impact on non-masons for the simple reason that the defense of Freemasonry is usually directed at other freemasons, not at the masses who are the targets of the anti-masonic evangelists. What is obviously needed is a broader audience for the defense.

One point that is confusing to many is the frequent statement by masonic writers that freemasons are "religious." They are, but being religious in no way carries with it the concept of being part of a separate religion.

Usually, the allegation that Freemasonry is a separate religion is helped along by one or more blatant falsehoods—for example: the charge that Freemasonry has its own path to salvation through the performance of good works. I never met a freemason who believed that, nor who would be able to understand how anyone could ever draw such a conclusion. In practice, it is a handy point for anti-masons, who are frequently confronted with "but, if freemasons are such evil people, how do you explain their free hospitals, language disorder clinics for children, their many, many summer camps for children, their eye-care programmes, their tutoring programs, their homes for the elderly, and all those other masonic charities?"

The anti-masonic answer comes back as "the masonic charities are not beloved by God because the freemasons teach that good works are the way to salvation. That makes those charities against the will of God." That is sick, but it is what some of them say.

Freemasonry leaves it up to the individual freemason to choose his pathway to God, and that policy naturally includes no rules, advice, or

admonition as to the means of salvation. The freemason is expected, quite properly, to get that spiritual guidance from his own denomination, which he is encouraged to support with both his energy and his personal finances

Time after time in various lectures, the freemason is told never to put his duties and responsibilities to the masonic fraternity ahead of his duties and responsibilities to his church, to his country, and to his family. As for masonic charities, whether they are organized major efforts or individual acts of kindness (such as aid to a destitute brother or to his widow and their children) the freemason is told to make no gift that will offset his duty to care for his own family.

In the ceremonies and lectures that lead to a man being raised to the status of Master Mason, he hears no description of heaven or hell. He hears no religious dogma. He hears no mention of Satan. He is told of no masonic path to salvation for the simple reason that there is none.

The only religious item in the masonic lodge is the Holy Book of the initiate's own faith.

Since most freemasons are Christians, that book is usually the King James version of the Holy Bible. The initiate may be given a masonic Bible by his lodge, his friends, or his family, but it varies from other editions and actual scripture by not one single word. It is only a "masonic" Bible because it also contains a brief history of Freemasonry, or a concordance to relate to certain masonic ritual or scriptural passages.

In the lecture accompanying the initiation rites of the First Degree, called Entered Apprentice, he is told that how he chooses to worship God is up to his own conscience.

Every meeting of freemasons opens and closes with prayer. Every meal begins with prayer. Freemasons also offer prayers for charitable

endeavors, for bereaved freemasons and their families, or for a departed brother.

Clearly, one can easily assert that Freemasonry is not a separate religion. It promotes no heaven, no hell, and no means of salvation. There is no "witnessing" or arguing over religious belief in the lodge. There is no religious dogma. It can't be a religion.

Nevertheless, it is frequently charged that the masonic lodge has its own God, whose name is "The Great Architect of the Universe." That masonic term is not a name; it is a designation or reference, as are all terms beginning with the word "The" — The Almighty, The Creator, The Most High. If it starts with "The," it is not a name, so why do the freemasons use that designation?

Freemasonry, as its name implies, centres symbolically on the ancient builders of temples and cathedrals. It is natural for groups to fashion a designation for God that relates to their interests. In the military, I attended an outdoor church service conducted by a visiting chaplain, an ordained minister. He referred to God as "Our Supreme Commander-in-Chief in Heaven." The freemasons often refer to God as the Great Architect of the Universe, but what is wrong with that? The architect is one who plans and brings a structure into being. As a designation for God, the Great Architect of the Universe makes sense, and it means precisely the same thing as the universally popular "The Creator." The slight difference is that the masonic designation implies that God created the world according to a plan, although there is no masonic description of what that plan may have been.

Then there is the charge that the Third Degree, that of Master Mason, teaches a masonic resurrection. That simply is not true, and I have to believe that those who make that allegation are fully aware



Grand Lodge 133rd Annual Communication

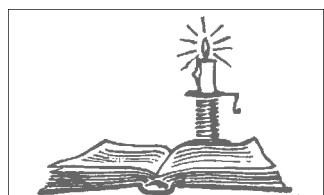
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that it is not true. When, in debates, I have told people who trot out that charge that they are either ignorant of the truth, or deliberately lying, they tend to back off. They change the subject, rather than attempting to prove their point, which they know cannot be done (Their own followers never demand that they prove anything).

The act referred to in the allegation of resurrection is easily identified. In the initiation drama of the Third Degree, the Master Builder of Solomon's Temple is murdered by three assassins, who hide the body in an obscure grave in the wilderness. By the time the grave is discovered, the body is decomposing. It is dug up and brought back to Jerusalem for proper burial. Taking a body from one grave to put it into another is called "re-internment," or "re-burial. It meets no definition of resurrection.

A favorite charge is that Freemasonry must be a religion because it has a funeral service. The critics never mention that the masonic service is in addition to the religious service, not in place of it. I have attended many military funeral services that took place after the graveside service, and they offer a good comparison. The military is in full-dress uniform, and there is often a squad with rifles who fire a volley into the air above the open grave. The coffin is covered with a flag. After the military salute, the flag is removed from the coffin, folded in the traditional triangular shape, and formally presented to the nearest relative of the departed individual before the coffin is lowered and covered.

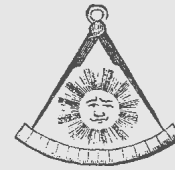
Does this mean that the military is a separate religion? Of course not. It simply means that a departed brother is acknowledged and honored by a group of peers. Ask your local policeman if he has ever attended a graveside service for a fallen law enforcement

officer. A chaplain who may not be of the same faith as the deceased often conducts the police service. Sometimes hundreds and even thousands of law enforcement officers, who may never have met their fallen brother, will attend the ceremony, which is carried out in addition to the regular religious service. Does this mean that the police department is a separate religion? Of course not. That is exactly the spirit of a masonic funeral service, and I know from personal experience that widows, parents, and children appreciate the tribute paid to a loved one whom they mourn.

One anti-masonic charge that really distorts the spirit of the fraternity arises from the fact that when a freemason takes the oath of loyalty to the masonic brotherhood, the masonic symbols of the square and compasses rest on top of the Holy Bible. To the mason-hater, that clearly means that freemasons put their order above God. If you go into a courtroom tomorrow and place your hand on top of the Bible to take an oath to tell the truth, or to take an oath of office, does the higher position of your hand mean that you are putting yourself above God?

A reverse allegation is that the freemason must be the anti-Christ because there are no symbols of Jesus in the lodge room. No, there are not. Nor are there symbols there of any other religion. They would not be appropriate to a fraternal society, especially one specifically espousing freedom of religion to the extent of admitting men of all faiths.

A more recent anti-masonic allegation is based on the fact that masons teach lessons of morality, which they illustrate with the tools of the mediaeval stonemason: for example, the square, the compasses, the setting maul, the level, and the plumbline. These lessons relating to principles such as



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY MARCH, 2004

8	Mon	Board of General Purposes	2:00 pm	Chilliwack
8	Mon	District 18	Ionic-Kent No. 19	Chilliwack
12	Fri	District 1	Victoria-Columbia No. 1	Victoria
13	Sat	District 22	Comox No. 188	Comox
14	Sun	District 1	Church Parade	Victoria
18	Thu	District 14	Keystone-Lions Gate No. 115	Vancouver
22	Mon	Construction Night:	University Lodge No. 91	Vancouver
27	Sat	District 3	Mt. St. Paul No. 109	Kamloops

self-improvement, fair dealing, truthfulness, and charity, are objectionable to some religious leaders because morality is being taught without specific reference to Jesus. They call it 'secular humanism.' There is no way to answer that charge, because it is based on the concept that without Jesus there is no such thing as moral teaching. Since most of the world's population is not Christian, we can only hope that position is wrong. However, all manner of secular societies encourage their members to live by moral codes, including the Campfire Girls, the Boy Scouts of America, 4-H Clubs, the American Bar Association, and the American Medical Association (whose codes of ethics could easily be labeled "secular humanism."). As we look at the state of society we live in today, it seems wise to endorse the teaching of moral behavior by any means whatsoever.

Strangely enough, Freemasonry may be the only organization on the face of the earth that practices, to its detriment, the scriptural admonition to turn the other cheek. Freemasons have suffered generations of abuse stemming from false allegations and rarely have answered back. Freemasons all over the country have shared with me their

feelings that it is time for a change, time for Freemasonry to speak out, and I fully agree. ■

Excerpted from the December 1997 issue of Masonic Community Monitor, Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington.

Veterans

Brethren who are veterans of the Second World War, but not involved with a the Legion, may not have heard about the Sixtieth Anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. A tentative schedule of events will have a morning cavalcade of veterans along the Normandy coast on Friday, 4 June, 2004. On the Saturday there will be a ceremony and wreath laying at the Canadian War Cemetery, Beny-sur-Mer (GoC) and on Sunday, a ceremony and wreath laying at the Juno Beach Centre (GoC). There will be other ceremonies on the following Monday at the Caen Memorial Garden, at la Place de l'Ancienne Boucherie and the Abbaye d'Ardenne at St Germain la Blanche Herbe. On Tuesday, 8 June, a final ceremony and wreath laying will take place at the Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery, Cintheaux. For details, and confirmation of the schedule, call toll free at 1-800-387-0930, or email communications@vac-acc.gc.ca ■