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Our Grand Master's address

by MW Bro. Robert McSween

Throughout my life I have received many accolades and honours, but, today you have bestowed upon me the greatest honour any brother can hope for. This day you have chosen me to serve as your Grand Master. This is an honour that I am very humbled to accept, and an honour that I do not take lightly. It is indeed a very serious undertaking and in doing so I hope that I bring honour, not only to you my brethren, but, to the fraternity throughout our jurisdiction and wherever I may travel, and in whatever I do. I realize that I have a great path to walk if I am to follow those who have walked this path before, and I look forward to the challenge with much anticipation.

There is a great challenge ahead of me and I do not count myself as being alone in facing this challenge. Not only

do I have a great slate of Grand Lodge Officers who also face this great challenge ahead of us; but, I trust that you will also be there to support, not only myself and my Grand Lodge Officers, but Grand Lodge and all it stands for, in meeting any challenge that may lay before us. I believe that together we can do anything we set our minds to. Together, we can be a formidable team, which can achieve great things.

To meet this challenge I have chosen as a theme for my year, "Strength Through Unity." This theme has many meanings. It means having strength in our lodges, strength in our districts, strength with our concordant bodies, strength with our fellow men, strength in our community and strength in our everyday life, with everyone we meet.

Having strength in our



MWBro. Robert McSween, Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon Ancient Free and Accepted Masons.

lodges means many things, such as having and demanding not only good ritual, good attendance, good deportment, and good behavior, but most importantly, good fellowship. Lodges which follow these principles are growing and doing very well. They are attracting more members and have interesting meetings which members enjoy going to. Lodges that accept a lower standard are not achieving this high standard that we expect from ourselves and are slowly deteriorating. They are not

attracting new members nor are they retaining their current members but, worse than that, they are not giving their own members the confidence they require in having the ability to achieve anything worthwhile. Having a strong and vibrant lodge does not come easily. It takes a lot of hard work through team efforts or unity, and once achieved it can be easily maintained if the effort is given to do so. The rewards for maintaining that high standard though, are rich beyond belief.

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Our Grand Master's address
from page one

Lodges that are not prepared to put forth the effort to achieve success are likely doomed to failure and will fall by the wayside.

Having strength in our districts also means many things. The district lodges should not only support each other through visitation to lodge meetings, but in their leisure hours as well. Many of our lodges have social events that have taken a lot of effort on the part of a member or members of the lodge to put together in order to achieve success, but, we don't always see support from all the lodges within the district. On the same note, those who do not support others in their efforts and try something themselves that fails, feel rejected when they themselves do not get support. This is because it takes, and always will take, a team effort to be successful. Remember, someone has to take the first step in being a team leader within the district and once it catches on it becomes contagious.

It becomes contagious because it shows success and everyone wants to be successful and they want to be associated with those who are successful. They require success to be happy with themselves and once done, it becomes habit forming.

In order to achieve this success and become a team, we must first of all have a clear understanding of not only who

we are as a Craft lodge, but, also of who we are as a collective body. Simply put, we do not know enough of or fully understand who we are. If I were to ask you to tell me about the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, the Shrine, the Order of the Eastern Star, and the Van Zor Grotto, what could you tell me, or the brother sitting beside you? Better yet, what could he tell you? Perhaps quite a bit, but most likely very little! The point I am trying to make is that we simply do not know enough about ourselves. If we do not know enough about ourselves, how can we project ourselves to others in a positive manner?

I believe that we can achieve success here if we make ourselves more knowledgeable not only about who we are and what we are about but also by knowing who our concordant bodies are and what they are about! What are our philanthropies and what are theirs? I have instructed the District Deputy Grand Masters to invite a concordant body to a lodge within their district and have them explain to the brethren of that lodge what their ideals and their philanthropies are about. This concordant body will be of the choosing of the DDGM and the members of his district. In addition, I have asked each of the concordant bodies to invite Grand Lodge to a meeting of their choice and location, in order that we also may make ourselves more knowledgeable of each other. At each of these meetings I would be pleased and honoured to have any brother available to attend to enter this meeting with me as a part of my suite—if this is allowed by that concordant body. By doing so it is my hope that we should be able to make ourselves more knowledgeable of each other. I must add that this is by no means a membership drive for anyone. In fact I would be greatly disappointed if it came to that. Instead it would be a drive for more

knowledge. By being more knowledgeable of each other, we will also be stronger in supporting each other in "Strength Through Unity".

There is one catch though. That catch is simply that if there is a Job's Daughters Bethel or DeMolay chapter within the district, they must be invited first, and then a concordant body can be invited. The reason for this is because we must support our youth first, and by doing this it will clearly demonstrate to everyone that we do support our youth members. In addition, I have asked each DDGM to have as many members from his district attend a Job's Daughters Bethel or DeMolay chapter if one exists in the district.

Leadership is another area of concern. If we have strong leadership within our jurisdiction then it goes without saying that we will have stronger lodges. I have been able, with the assistance of some brethren, to set up Leadership Workshops throughout our jurisdiction and these will be run by brethren of that particular area. By doing so, we will now be able to run a leadership workshop on an as-needed basis, because the team leaders will remain in these areas. The areas picked out to date are Victoria, Nanaimo, Prince George, Okanagan Area, Peace Region, Vernon, and the Kootenay Region. I am still looking for a brother to handle the Vancouver area and Fraser Valley area. I am certain that we will find someone within these two areas who will take on this task for us. Once done, we will have no excuse for poor leadership in our lodges. We have had success in our Leadership Workshops which have been previously conducted in the past by RW Bro. Stephen Godfrey and VW Bro. Art Scott, and it is to them that we owe so much. Hopefully we can carry on with that which they have started and show strength in our lodges and districts with

well educated brethren in running successful lodges. Remember, strong leadership also leads to "Strength Through Unity" within our lodges and districts.

Each of the DDGMs has been given a package which will assist the lodges in becoming stronger in "Strength Through Unity". This package is the "Lodge Excellence Award" programme. There are two ways the lodges can receive this Excellence Award. There are two sets of standards that are easy to achieve, and it will all be on the honour system with the lodges in receiving recognition within their districts from the DDGMs. There are 11 Major Standards and 18 Optional Standards. To achieve a "Lodge Performance Award" lodges must achieve six of the Optional Standards and six of the Major Standards and to achieve the "Lodge Excellence Award" they must achieve seven of the Optional Standards and seven of the Major Standards. Again this is all on the honour system within the lodges to indicate that they have achieved these standards in order to be recognized by the DDGM on my behalf. I will leave the details of this package to the DDGMs to explain to the lodges within their districts. It is my most sincere wish that the lodges look favourably upon this programme. I believe it can only lead to success within our lodges and districts.

The last thing I wish to speak of is our membership. Over the past years and decades we have dwindled in numbers. Some of us think that the reduction of numbers is extremely serious and that we will eventually cease to exist. I do not share in this belief. I think Freemasonry will always exist if we hold on to our ideals and do not drop our high standard of principles. There is one thing that we should remember and that is the fact that we have almost 12,000 members. We do not need



W Bro. Palmer Cox

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more members. We just need to keep the ones that we already have. If we could get all of our members out to a lodge meeting there would be some lodges that could not accommodate them all because the lodge halls would simply be too small. This is the problem that we should have.

However, we can not ignore the fact that we are losing approximately 80% of our members within the first four years of their membership. To help us understand why we are losing so many at such an early stage I have instructed our Grand Secretary to send to all lodges a form that must be filled out whenever a brother requests a demit. This form will have certain questions to be answered and these answers will be compiled and presented to this Grand Lodge Communication in the year 2006. It will cover the top reasons for so many demits, and hopefully explain to us our shortcomings. We may not like the answers we receive but we also can not ignore their reasons for requesting demits. Perhaps if we understand why we are losing these members we can stop the decline from happening at such a rapid pace and perhaps we will finally realize that we are a strong fraternal organization with much to offer those who are interested in joining.

This is a year in which we can be productive in Freemasonry, by speaking only of positive statements, which come from positive thoughts, and then follow up with positive actions. Those who have a negative statement should remain silent. We simply do not have the time to listen to them and have them drag us down or degrade our high standards. For those with a negative statement, my only remarks to you are to keep quiet and listen to the brother with positive statements and heed his words. With this type of attitude Freemasonry will

always succeed and we can then be proud to say to everyone "I am a freemason and I am proud of what freemasons do." ■

Lodge notes

In 2004 the Cancer Cars on Vancouver Island made 2,692 patient trips and logged 236,603 kilometres. In recognition of the value of this programme the Bowan Road Coastal Community Credit Union—through **Nanaimo Lodge No. 110**—recently donated over \$540 to help fuel the cars.

Rainbow Lodge No. 180 received a favourable notice, and photograph, in their community newspaper when W Bro. Wes Harvie presented a \$1,000 scholarship to a North Island student who will be attending Malaspina College.

Manoah Lodge No. 141 received some well-deserved publicity last April when *The Westerly News* in Ucluelet reported on our then Grand Master, MW Bro. William Unrau, making a donation to the West Coast General Hospital and to the Ucluelet Volunteer Fire Brigade: two large photographs, and they spelt our name right. ■

100th reunion

The British Columbia Consistory (BCC) of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry will celebrate its 100th anniversary with a reunion on 21-22 October in Vancouver.

Hosted by the Valley of Vancouver, courtesy candidates will be welcomed from other Valleys. This reunion will provide an opportunity to brethren who, due to time constraints, have yet to obtain their Scottish Rite degrees. This reunion is open to new

candidates as well as brethren who have not obtained their 32°. Ladies are invited for dinner on the Saturday evening and to be present, for the first time in the BCC, to witness the Allegory.

To have a "Class of 100" for the BC Consistory 100th year anniversary would be most fitting.

Any brother who has not been approached by a Scottish Rite representative, and is interested in attending this reunion, please contact Walter Rae, Grand Secretary BCC, at 604-736-3936. ■

Chaplain's Corner

RW Bro. Doug R. Sowden

For many in our society, September is the start of a new year. For students, teachers, professors, and mothers and others, the first week of September is the time children go back to school.

New Year's Day is the start of a new year, but that date is not January 1st for all. We have many different New Years in our pluralistic society. Some regard Advent Sunday as the start of a new year, for others it's Rosh Hashanah.

Whatever day it is, New Year is a starting date. How many of us put off resolutions until a good starting date? You know, "I'll start dieting on Monday", "I'll quit smoking after I finish my vacation", "I'll do more of what I want to do, when I retire" etc. We postpone resolution making—and implementing—until that one propitious day when it seems best to start, be it New Year's or next Monday.

We may have many dreams floating delightfully through our minds. We may even have some abstract steps in mind to get to our goals, but they are steps of air with no substance because we avoid starting the hard work of concrete actions. How often do we sojourn in

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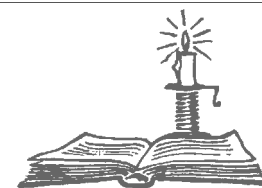
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the fields of good intentions, dreams, wishes and visions, and put off our travels and travails?

We need to have a clear vision before starting out. It's a very good idea to know what we hope to accomplish. It is necessary to have a plan. It's functional to have a list of required equipment and supplies. All these things are good prerequisites to accomplishment. However, at some point the planning must become performance.

We must stop postponing action merely by waiting for that propitious starting day, whenever it may be.

May I humbly suggest that it could be today? Why not start now? Why wait?

Psalms 118 tells us, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." Let us be productive too. When you wake up next morning, it will be the start of a new day. Make it the day to start working on your best dreams, and may God be with you and bless you. ■

Uniformity

W Bro. Henry Sadler, 1889

The fact is we never have had exact uniformity, and under our present system I do not see how we can secure it. It must be admitted, however, that we have not done badly on the whole, and I think if some of us were to pay more attention to the spirit and objects of Freemasonry, and less to the letter and external decorations, it might be all the better for us individually as well as for Freemasonry as a Society.

Notes on the Ceremony of Installation. London: George Kenning, 1889.

The lost secrets

by RW Bro. W. J. Barclay

As a young man, naïve and literal minded, I was shocked and disappointed when raised

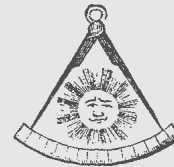
to the Master Mason degree. After solemn ceremonies leading onward and upward to a still more solemn climax, I was told that the genuine secrets of a Master Mason had been lost, and substitute secrets were glibly offered me in their stead. I continued hopefully to anticipate that notwithstanding some failure on my part or some test I did not apprehend, I would be received before the evening was over into full communion with the brethren, by the bestowal of the genuine secrets of Freemasonry.

I shall not enlarge on my disappointment. At the first convenient opportunity I privately asked an older friend, who had been in the order some years, for an explanation. I wanted to know if it were really true the genuine secrets of a Master Mason had been lost. His answer was more facetious than helpful.

That was the beginning of my search for the Lost Secrets. Now after forty-two years in the Craft may I offer such results as I have attained. I am limited to a few words, therefore, my toils and tribulations must be wholly passed by, and the findings summed up in a few words

The search for the Lost Secrets is one of the oldest quests of the human mind. It began ages ago and will continue for ages to come. Only the symbols vary. The ancient Greeks formulated it in the idea of The Golden Age. Man's place and purpose in the universe and his relationship to the gods exercised their speculative ingenuity. They saw man endowed with the body of the brute and the intelligence of the divine, occupying a middle place in creation. Was his affinity to the higher or to the lower? The Greek answer was the Golden Age of a more ancient time when men, like the gods, were immortal and happy.

The search for the Lost Secrets is the theme of the



Grand Master's Itinerary SEPTEMBER, 2005

10	Sat	50th Anniversary	Aurora Lodge No. 165	Victoria
15	Thu	Railway Night	Acacia No. 22	Vancouver
15-16	Thu-Sat	Supreme Session	Scottish Rite	Toronto
23	Fri	Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes		Tofino
23	Fri	Grand Lodge Line Officers Meeting		Tofino
24	Sat	50th Anniversary	Euclid No. 158	Port Alberni
30	Fri	Concordant Bodies Meeting (1:00 pm)		Vancouver
30	Fri	1765 Degree	Corner Stone Players	Vancouver

Volume of the Sacred Law. The opening chapters tell us of the Golden Age of the Jew and the Christian. They call it Paradise. The rest of the book tells how knowledge of the Lost Secrets may be achieved. However we may vary the symbols—a Golden Age, a Paradise, the Holy Grail, the Ancient Wisdom, or the Lost Secrets of a Master Mason—the essentials of the search remain the same.

And every man must find the secrets for himself. Whether it is crudely felt, or refined in abstract thought, every man must acquire his own philosophy, his own spiritual creed, his own answer to the everlasting question of man's place in the cosmos, his relationship to The Great Architect of the Universe. ■

Reprinted from Masonic Bulletin, May 1938.

The real freemason

In *The Farmers Almanac* for 1823 the following was printed under the heading "Character of a Freemason."

"The real freemason is distinguished from the rest of mankind by the uniform unrestrained rectitude of his conduct. Other men are honest in fear of punishment which the law might inflict; they are religious in expectation of being rewarded, or in dread of the

devil, in the next world. A freemason would be just if there were no laws, human or divine except those written in his heart by the finger of his Creator. In every climate, under every system of religion, he is the same. He kneels before the Universal Throne of God in gratitude for the blessings he has received and humble solicitation for his future protection. He venerates the good men of all religions. He disturbs not the religion of others. He restrains his passions, because they cannot be indulged without injuring his neighbour or himself. He gives no offense, because he does not choose to be offended. He contracts no debts which he is certain he cannot discharge, because he is honest upon principle."

What a freemason is has not changed from that time until today. It is our task to ensure that we carry on this heritage. We are the caretakers of our fraternity and we must do our best to live up to these ideals. ■

Reprinted from the North Dakota Freemason.

Thanks

Our Grand Secretary, MW Bro. James C. Gordon wishes to extend his thanks to the many brethren who expressed their sympathy to him and his wife, Sheila, after their recent auto accident. ■