

TRESTLEBOARD



MacDonough, Webster, Warner, Ethan Allen

WM John Oleszkiewicz; Sec. Victor Stone



Happy Christmas! Another year has gone by and we are closing in on what is considered the most festive time of year. To be followed by the start of a New Year, when most of us make vows to make the New Year better. Let this be a most enjoyable time for all.

I wish all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

We have had a couple of unusual years in our Lodge and in the world in general. In the past twenty months or more, we have held business meetings by Zoom, had a steak out dinner with masks on and done without our traditional meals for most of our meetings. Yet with all these challenges, as a Lodge, we still have made significant progress. We have renewed our efforts to improve the condition of the Lodge building, which was neglected for a long time. Due to changes in our by-laws and dues collection, we are now operating in the black financially, for the first time in many years. The merger with Ethan Allen lodge has been operating seamlessly, largely due to the consideration and respect of Masons from both Lodges. We have seen an increase in new members and degrees, although we still have room for more. We have a lot to appreciate and be thankful for this past year.

I want to personally thank all of you who have made the past year successful and productive. Despite restrictions caused by the pandemic we have made safe and appropriate accommodations to continue to operate as a Lodge. To me it is proof that with cooperation, supportive members and clear direction, we can still accomplish meaningful goals, even with obstacles in our way.

Again, wishing all of you and your families the best this Christmas season and for next year....*John*



George Washington's Rule of Civility #1: Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect to those that are present.



'Twas The Night Before Christmas, Down At The Lodge

'Twas the Night before Christmas, and down at the lodge
not a gavel was stirring, and in the hodge-podge.
Of aprons and jewels and chairs East and West
You could savor the silence, most gladly divest
All metal and mineral, it mattered not,
Since Christmas was nigh and the coals were still hot.
In the hearth of your home place, all Masons abed,
As visions of trestle boards danced in their head;
When up on the roof there arose such a clatter
Our Tyler jumped up to see what was the matter!
He picked up his sword and ran fast to the door,
Three knocks shook the panels – he wondered 'What for?'
He answered the knocking with raps of his own,
And once the door opened, he saw, with a moan
Of delight it was Santa, all jolly and red
Except for one notable feature instead!
Upon his large finger he wore what we knew
Was compass and square on a background of blue!
'Why Santa!' he shouted and lowered his blade,
'I see you're a Mason!' the Tyler relayed.
He looked toward the Master's most dignified chair
And said, voice near trembling, 'Most Worshipful there
Is a Gentleman properly clothed at the gate!'
The Master replied, 'Let's allow him – but wait!
You tell me a Gentleman, but I don't see
His Apron beneath that red suit, can it be
Our visitor hasn't been properly raised?
Must we offer a test that is suitably phrased?
'I do beg your pardon,' ol' Santa said quick
As he pulled up his coat and displayed not a stick
But a cane with engraving, two balls did appear
And oh, what an apron, he wore and held dear!
Adorned like the Master's, complete with a sign
Of "Lodge Number One, the North Pole" on one line!
"Now let this man enter," the Master declared,
And once in the Lodge room, the Brethren all stared,
For Santa was wearing a jewel not seen
For many a century – there in between
The fur of his coat and the splendid red collar
Gleamed two golden reindeer that shone like a dollar!
"It's Donner and Blitzen, who I must confess
"Are actually images brought from the West
By my Warden, a craftsman like none in the world!"
And with a great laugh from his bag he unfurled
An ear of fine corn, and some oil from the East,
"My friend I have plenty, tonight we will feast
On all that is good! We are Masons, kind sir!"
A murmur went throughout the Lodge, quite a stir,
As presents and promises flew from his sack!,
A Mason, showed he had a knack
For making this Christmas the best you could glean,
And soon even Deacons were laughing, they'd seen
On this very night only, happiness reigned!
This jolly Saint Nicholas quickly explained
That only a Mason could be so inclined
To make all kids happy, make all people find
A Christmas so special, yes, Santa was right!
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!
With the Season's Greetings to one and all.

Member Profile.....



Brother **Ted Ruszas** was born in Albany, New York in 1942 and moved with his parents to Burlington in 1958. After he graduated from Burlington High School in 1961, he went to work at General Electric, where he was employed for 40 years, doing administrative work.

Ted married his wife of 38 years, Liz on August 19, 1972. They moved to Underhill shortly after getting married and has lived there ever since. He and Liz built their current house in the foothills of Mount Mansfield 30 years ago. From that location he has watched the town grow over the years and he can remember driving home from work in Burlington and seeing no traffic at all after Essex Junction.

With his wife, he raised a daughter and two sons. He now has three grandchildren and four great grandchildren. The younger generations in his family have continued his interest in the outdoors; his son is a ranger in Alaska. Other than the Alaskan contingent, his family lives in Fletcher. His grandson is a State police officer in Vermont. His daughter worked for the Sisters of Mercy in Burlington for many years.

He has enjoyed the outdoors his entire life. He had been a scout when he was a boy, and later on, he shared his enthusiasm with many others as a scout leader for 25 years. He led camping trips, taught skills such as fire prevention, and so forth. He met his wife Liz through their shared enthusiasm for the outdoors. She was working on a program at Edmunds Middle School to provide outdoor activities for city kids.

Ted served in the Air National Guard at the Burlington airport from 1961 to 1969.

Bro. Ted has been a Mason for over 42 years having been raised a Master Mason in McDonough Lodge #26 on March 21, 1979. He has served as Master of the Jericho Lodges four different times and was a key decision maker in the mergers that brought the various Lodges under the umbrella of Mt. Mansfield Lodge #26. He has also served the Lodge as Tyler, Assistant Secretary, Secretary and Marshal.

To that undiscovered country from whose bourne..."I dreamed death came last night and Heaven's gates swung wide. With kindly grace an angel ushered me inside. And there to my astonishment stood folks I'd known on earth. Some I'd known and labeled as 'unfit' or of 'little worth.' Indignant words rose to my lips but never were set free. For every face showed stunned surprise. No one expected me."

Our Lodge's Christmas Tree

King Solomon had wealth untold
Delivered to his door,
Great stocks of silver, brass, and gold,
And workmen by the score.
Gardens with lovely flowers strewn,
Cedars of Lebanon, had he;
Yet one thing lacked. He lived too soon
And never had a Christmas tree.

Well, we don't have a lot of wealth,
But we're a friendly Lodge, you bet.
Our wives can cook, we have good health,
And evergreens aren't hard to get.
I'm glad I live today, because,
Together with the Stars, you see,
And Chubby Charles for Santa Claus,
We have a dandy Christmas tree!

Walter K. Belt, Oregon



Thoughts on Observing the Craft

By

Victor Stone, PhD, PGM

I couldn't agree more with Robert Wolfarth's cover blurb for *Observing the Craft* by Andrew Hammer that there is "more to lodge than paying bills and approving the minutes." Brother Hammer has revealed in just 154 pages of text that there is more to be had from the Masonic experience than is commonly the case and that it

can be had with a modicum of work and observance. This work is refreshing in that it not only identifies problems and issues but presents alternatives and solutions.

Andrew Hammer's arguments fall along four basic threads:

- 1) Masonry has a deep philosophical nature
- 2) The pursuit of excellence should permeate all that we do in Masonry
- 3) Myriad distractions subvert the foundations of the symbolic lodge
- 4) Ritual and ceremony are innate elements of the Masonic experience

All of the above being said, there are also a few areas where the author perhaps takes his arguments too far, particularly as it relates to the use of personal aprons, due consideration of

what others think of our organization, and the topic of membership numbers. The following narrative will address all of these points.

The Philosophic Nature of Masonry

For the most part, this book is built on the assumption that the reader is generally aware of the philosophical underpinnings of Freemasonry; that the reader has digested his Masonic Monitor and perhaps has followed up with additional research. Appropriately, there is no deep discussion about principles, tenets, and the moral base of freemasonry, that can be found elsewhere. The author does remind us; however, that the intent of those who founded the fraternity was to create space where men could “contemplate and discuss the meanings of things philosophical as well empirical” within a framework of freedom and tolerance. Equally important, he avers that without our philosophy, we lose our meaning, and when we lose our meaning we lose our reason to exist. These observations remind readers of the original motivation to bring organized Masonry into existence which was to engage members in the work of intellectual self-development, a very “age of enlightenment” conception.

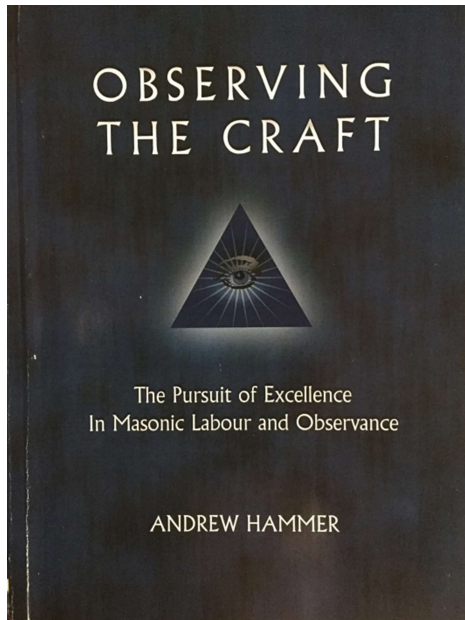
The closing argument for the importance of the philosophical nature of Freemasonry comes from his line of reasoning that concludes that the symbolic Lodge is the quintessential *raison d’etre* of Freemasonry and that it must be sustained and supported above and beyond anything else. He argues that without intellectual development, learning, and a continuing quest for self-improvement, Masonry cannot achieve its effect on member’s lives. If there is no overt attempt to influence a member’s life (for the better) then there is no reason for a man to be involved in Masonry.

The Pursuit of Excellence

The author presents a compelling case about the necessary pursuit of excellence in Masonry. Most Masons are familiar with the symbolism associated with the rough and perfect ashlar but they somehow lose their bearings as they attempt to translate that ideal to reality. Hammer lays out a series of thoughts that build support for the notion that we can and should do better. He notes that as a philosophical society our organization should expect that members will seek the highest standards in all areas of their labor and that they should pursue meaning instead of mediocrity. Too often Lodges have allowed themselves to descend to the lowest common denominator of performance. They have forgotten that men value most those things that are worked for rather than given and that genuine effort is the only way to self-improvement. Hence, the admonition to approach all dimensions of Masonic intercourse with attention to making each interaction the best that it can be. Increasing the quality of the Masonic experience has to be a top priority for all leaders in the fraternity.

Dealing with Distractions

This is perhaps the most interesting and risky set of thoughts proffered by the author as they take direct aim at the plethora of “masonic-like” groups and organizations that surround Blue Lodge Masonry. Hammer challenges the wisdom of a Mason’s involvement in these organizations as the time given to these groups, worthy as they may be, takes away from that time that might be



otherwise devoted to understanding what freemasonry genuinely is and in strengthening his Lodge. There is also a financial element to this argument. He makes the thoughtful observation that if all the money spent on dues to distracting organizations were reserved for our symbolic lodges they would not be in the degree of sad financial difficulty that they are now experiencing. With all of these financial distractions in place, Blue Lodge dues tend not to be high enough to actually fund their operations. The last point, which again pokes at a certain subset of Masons, is that if a member of the Craft is too busy accumulating memberships and titles in every appendant or concordant body there is no practical way for him to devote the time and effort needed to cultivate Masonic observance in his Masonic Lodge. These thoughts are refreshing and practical especially in a time when Blue Lodge health is noticeably deteriorating and since Blue Lodge membership

is a prerequisite for entrance into the other organizations.

Ritual and Ceremony

Simply said, without our ritual, Freemasonry is nothing more than a social or service club. Ritual in conjunction with the Masonic ethos create an organizational climate with a higher set of ideals, expectations, and opportunities for self-growth and development than any other similar or alternative organization in existence. The author reminds us that it is the ritual that transforms a room into a Lodge and the men in the room into Masons. Although not said directly in this book it is the ritual that is the binding force that brings all Masons together, creates the common platform and sets in place the mutual knowledge that allows good men to become brothers in Masonry. Hence, Hammer argues that how we approach the ritual is perhaps the single most important aspect of observing the Craft. Further, there are obvious close connections with the vital role of ritual in Masonry; the organization's values and principles, and the expectation that we will pursue our work with excellence.

Over the top, Maybe

As mentioned earlier, there were at least three lines of thought that I don't necessarily disagree with but that seem superfluous to an otherwise well-crafted and thoughtful thesis. First, that the "value of owning and wearing one's own apron is that in so doing, the Brother takes yet another level of ownership in his Craft." I agree with this to a point. It makes sense from the perspective that going to Lodge without your own "clothes" or wearing a paper apron or even a several times reused cloth one makes no sense. Each mason should have an apron that is simple, functional, and consistent with all others. Maybe that apron should be presented to a new Master Mason upon his raising. His lambskin should continue to be reserved for his final ceremony. I don't think it serves good purpose to have members spending time designing and crafting an ornamented apron. Obviously, this is a personal view.

Another point that I think needs to be addressed is the view that “what the uninitiated world thinks or knows of us is of no consequence.” I on the other hand think it is vital that the uninitiated world understands that we are a force for good in an otherwise crude, unseemly, and intolerant society. What we practice and offer good men of faith is exactly what our society needs more of; hence, I desperately want the outside world to know who and what we are. However, the uninitiated do not have a right or need to know how we do our work. Those things are indeed private.

Finally, I think balance needs to be applied to the discussion of membership numbers and Lodge size. We need to have sufficient members in the Lodge room to guarantee us of having enough talent in the gathering to move the organization forward. I agree with the author’s premise that “by working with fewer but dedicated men, the Craftsman gains more” and the notion that we don’t need huge Lodges to do our work. However, we need enough men so that the statistics of Lodge participation (roughly 20% to 25% in the US) will produce enough talent to make the Lodge work.

The above critique does nothing to take away from the value of this book to Freemasonry’s body of knowledge. Hammer’s work has influenced many of us and offers support for views that many of us have developed on our own. It is thoughtful, evidence laden, logical and practical....even interesting.

Each year Mt. Mansfield Lodge obtains a dispensation from the Grand Master to hold a Lodge meeting at the old Warner #50 Lodge room. This past October those pictured on the right attended the meeting. Bro. Rob Grandchamp presented a relevant historical perspective on Captain Moses McFarland, a mason and notable historical figure in Cambridge.



A MAN FOUND A MAGIC LAMP WITH A GENE WHO OFFERED HIM THREE WISHES. “FOR MY FIRST WISH,” HE SAID, “I’D LIKE TO BE RICH.” “OK, RICH,” THE GENE REPLIED. “WHAT’S YOUR SECOND WISH.”

The American Way

By John Oleszkiewicz

There is a super hero that stood to Truth, Justice and the American Way
That was a phrase attached to him since the early 1940s, for almost 80 years.
That hero was Superman.

DC Comics, just last month, October 2021, changed that slogan to say Truth, Justice and a Better Tomorrow. The reasoning is that it is more global and representative of wider positive values.

Critics say that the change was a lack of pride in America. Others say that divisional fragments are the signature of the American way, so it is not as clear-cut any more.

On another note: According to a recent poll 60 percent of Americans feel that the past generation had it better.



I'd like to briefly explore what this means to us as Masons.

Historically, in fact, there are records tracing back to other countries, governments and empires and **every single** generation had some reference to the fact the last generation was better in some way, references go back over the last 5000 years, although maybe not always conducted in polls.

Looking at it mathematically, if we assume there was a only slight decline in values from the past generations by, say by 3% , or said another way, we are 97% as good as the prior generation. Some say that this percentage decline is way too little. If we compound the decline mathematically back to the Egyptian times, about 150 to 200 generations, when the early Egyptian dynasties were in power, and when there were many slaves and starvation was not uncommon, things by that calculation were 500 times better than now. Makes you think... maybe we need more pyramids. Or perhaps we may be looking at things the wrong way.

OK... so what does the American way mean to Masons and how to we work to make sure our values do not decline. In the 1st degree we are told to be true to your country and just to your government and in later degrees- not giving away the full content to non-Masons reading this- we are told to make the best of ourselves as citizen in this Great Republic.

When we open a Masonic meeting, in the traditional flag ceremony, using the US flag as a representation of America, we say it stands for Liberty, Justice and Opportunity. Masons need to remember that outside of the meeting hall. If we all do our best to remember those values, maybe there won't be a decline from generation to generation and we won't have to move stones to build pyramids to feel good about ourselves.

We are thankful today for America's Veterans and their support and service to our country. Let us also be thankful today and the upcoming holidays and remember that we meet Liberty, practice our rights in Safety and worship God according to the dictates of our conscience here in America. This is what I believe is the American Way.

A young man was visiting a young lady and her little brother kept hanging around. He wanted to get rid of the little guy as he was cramping their style. So he told the boy to look out of the window and he would give him a dime for every red hat that went by. There was music in the distance and it got louder and louder. Finally, the boy said "Yippee, here comes the Shriner's parade."



On Monday, October 25th the Brothers of Mt. Mansfield Lodge #26 gathered together to work the Master Mason's degree for our newest Master Mason, Brother Jeff Clark (front row, third from the right). This crowd of delighted Brothers wished Jeff a fruitful and enjoyable Masonic journey.

Next on the Schedule will be a Second Degree for Brother Carl Ellerkamp. This will be held on Thursday January 13th during the Lodge's Regular Communication. As of this writing there are plans to have a meal before the degree at 6:30PM. The Lodge will open at 7:30PM.



Howard Callihan
3/12/1951 – 9/18/2021
21 years a Mason



We humbly bow to the will of Devine Providence. While ever cherishing in our hearts the memory of our distinguished Brother. May he be in perfect peace and felicity. May the Ashlar of his life be found perfect and fit for the Temple. The men of Mt. Mansfield lodge #26 mourn the passing of this friend."



The Master, Wardens and Officers of Mt. Mansfield Lodge wish a happy and joyous holiday season to all and hope that 2022 is a year of prosperity and delight for all!

If you have an article or picture you would like to contribute to our next edition please forward to:

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