

# THE VOICE *of* FREEMASONRY

IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL



## BONSAI BOB

MWB BOB DRECHSLER'S  
DEVOTION TO FREEMASONRY  
AND A FEW VERY UNIQUE TREES.

PG. 14

# THE VOICE OF FREEMASONRY

Volume 37, Number 1  
2020 Issue

## EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Michael D. Nicholas, Sr. (Grand Master)  
Jeffrey D. Russell, PGM (Grand Secretary)

## MANAGING EDITOR

Jason Van Dyke, PM  
(Director of Communications)

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Scott Brown, PM  
Morgan P. Corr, PM  
Mark Dreisonstok, PM  
S. Forzley  
Andrew Hammer, PM  
Walter Hoenes, PM  
Chris Ruli  
Bernhard Zinkgraf

## DESIGN

Patricia Hord Graphik Design

## DCGRANDLODGE.ORG

The Voice of Freemasonry is an official publication of the Grand Lodge of Free And Accepted Masons (F.A.A.M.) of the District of Columbia. Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this publication express only the private opinion or assertions of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Grand Lodge. The jurisdiction speaks only through the Grand Master, and when attested to as official, in writing, by the Grand Secretary.

The editorial staff invites contributions in the form of informative articles, reports, news and other timely information (of about 500 to 1000 words in length) that broadly relate to Masonic law, lore, customs, history, symbolism, philosophy, responsibility of membership, etiquette, current events, and/or general public interest. When possible, photographs that illustrate these informative articles should accompany the submission. Pieces submitted should be typed, double-spaced and preferably accompanied by a computer disk in a neutral PC format or via e-mail to: grandlodge@dcgrandlodge.org

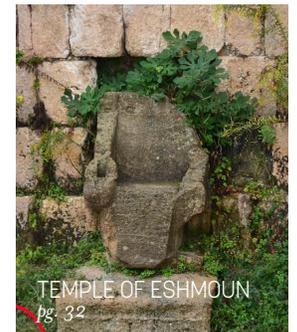
Articles are subject to editing and, when published, become the property of the Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M., of the District of Columbia. No compensation is allowed for any articles, photographs, or other materials submitted for publication.

Permission to reprint articles will be granted upon written request to the Editor from recognized Masonic publications and others. When reprinted, articles should note: "Reprinted with permission of The Voice of Freemasonry in the Nation's Capital, (volume), (number), (year)."

Please direct all correspondence to:

Managing Editor:  
The Voice of Freemasonry  
5428 MacArthur Blvd., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20016-2524  
grandlodge@dcgrandlodge.org

II | THE VOICE OF FREEMASONRY ISSUE 1, 2020



## CONTENTS

- 1 Grand Master's Message
- 3 First Lady's Message
- 6 New Joint DC Masonic COVID Relief Fund Formed
- 7 The Philosophers Stone Eluded Her
- 8 Anacostia-Pentalpha Lodge No. 21
- 12 How the Greeks and French Dwelt in Unity
- 14 Bonsai Bob
- 22 Masonic Clubs in the District
- 24 Photos of Installation
- 28 On the Question of Relevance
- 30 Freemasonry—Uniting Men Even During Apartheid
- 32 Temple of Eshmoun—Mystery School and Biblical Links

# GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

---

*Brethren and all Members of our Masonic Family,*

Greetings and best wishes for your continued health and prosperity.

In normal times, the first release of The Voice magazine is a celebration of the Installation of a new Grand Master, and it is full of enthusiastic articles about the new Masonic Year.

These are not normal times. In fact, by the time this column is read, the situation that surrounds the spread of this deadly virus will have undoubtedly changed. My prayer is that it will have changed for the better. Just this morning, as I was going about my “working from home” routine, I overheard our neighborhood trash truck making pickups. It’s amazing how just that sound — on time and on the right day — contributed to a sense that things were still under control. We are still managing our lives.

In a similar manner, the leadership of your Grand Lodge was determined to maintain normalcy in as many things as possible, and that included the publication of this magazine. We have not capitulated to wall-to-wall virus coverage. The bulk of this magazine is about how we continue to practice Freemasonry, even during this crisis. I am grateful to the dedicated Masons



*Michael D. Nicholas, Sr., Grand Master*

who have continued to labor in many areas, and who have kept Freemasonry functioning in our Nation’s Capital.

The feature article of this edition is dedicated to a Mason whom we all love and respect. Even though I have known Most Worshipful Brother Bob Drechsler for many years, I was not aware of his successful career as “Bonsai Bob.” His story is not only interesting, but an example for selfless service. He continues in that role even today, donating his time to our Grand Lodge Museum. I think you’ll enjoy it.

We have some other great articles in this edition as well. I encourage

anyone with the ability and desire to tell a story, to contribute to this magazine. We all learn when others share their knowledge.

## **ACTIONS RELATED TO THE COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) PANDEMIC: WE ALL LIFT EACH OTHER UP!**

Relief Process: Our Masonic Jurisdiction is blessed with multiple organizations that help fulfill our promise to help each other. Not only do we have the Masonic and Eastern Star Home (MESH), the DC Scottish Rite (DCSR), the Masonic Foundation (DCFM) and St Johns Mite, but many of our Lodges have the resources to provide aid. Coordinated by our “COVID Czar” RWB Morgan Corr ([mcorr@dcgrandlodge.org](mailto:mcorr@dcgrandlodge.org)), all of these groups have combined their resources to form the “Joint Masonic COVID Relief Fund.” By now all of you should have heard about this initiative. If not, check with your Worshipful Master, who knows the process. We are seeking donations to this fund from Lodges and individual Masons.

Goods Exchange: Is there some item you need and cannot find? It could be toilet paper, cleaning wipes, cold remedies, fever reducer, masks, baby formula, diapers, etc. Contact our Deputy COVID Czar, RWB Adam Tager ([atager@dcgrandlodge.org](mailto:atager@dcgrandlodge.org)). He is matching needs with those

who can share. Also contact him if you have something you are willing to share. Again, your WM knows the process.

**Giving of your time:** As you all know, our older Brethren and older members of our families are particularly vulnerable. Another group often overlooked is the families of our medical professionals, police, and first responders. They may need help just with the time to buy groceries. Volunteer your time to go grocery shopping for them. We're not asking you to pay for them, but to be the person that can shop and drop off on their porch or at their door. Let's keep our older members inside, and let's help our police and first responders be better enabled to do their jobs in assisting others.

**Sharing jobs:** You'll soon see another initiative — the Masonic Information Platform (MIP). We are just building this, but a dedicated group of DC Masons is developing a simple system to share information on a variety of topics. Are you out of work because your business has had to shut down? Let's share information on who is hiring. Companies like Amazon, UPS, UberEats, DoorDash and many others are experiencing a phenomenal growth in jobs. It doesn't have to be your new career, but it may be able to help you get through the next few months. Maybe you are a Mason who can afford to hire someone for a few hours a day, or part-time during the week. We'll advertise all of these things on the MIP, and help you link up with other DC Masons.

Brethren and friends, we are facing a crisis that no one in living memory can recall. But we are going to get through this, and we are going to be stronger because of it. We are going to have stronger Masons, stronger relationships, stronger Lodges, and a more vibrant and caring DC Freemasonry community.

To do this, we need to share with, and love one another. We all lift each other up! Don't let anyone fall through the cracks or be forgotten. There is nothing we'll leave undone, nothing we won't do for each other.

This is what Freemasonry is made for. This is why Freemasonry was created. Let it shine.



**M**ichael D. Nicholas, Sr. was raised in Ocean City, NJ. After graduating high school, he matriculated at the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering in 1977.

After graduation, he immediately began his service as an Airborne Ranger-qualified Armor Officer, serving in various United States Army tank and Armored Cavalry leadership positions. In 1985, he transitioned his service to the Army Reserves until 1997, when he was honorably discharged and continued in civilian life as a Professional Project Manager for commercial and Department of Defense IT projects. He was

assigned to Pentagon Operations during the tragedy of 9-11 and worked as part of the recovery & rebuilding efforts at the Pentagon.

Most Worshipful Brother Nicholas was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason at Lafayette-Dupont Lodge No. 19 in 2001. He served as Secretary of that Lodge from 2003 to 2008, and as Worshipful Master 2009 and 2010. He was appointed as Aide to the Grand Master in 2011 and Grand Marshal in 2012. The following year, he was elected Junior Grand Steward and subsequently elected Grand Master in December of 2019.

MW Bro. Nicholas has a long resume of accomplishments as a very active Mason in the District of Columbia, including service on the Boards of both the Masonic Foundation and the Masonic and Eastern Star Homes. He is also a member of several Masonic Bodies, including the Royal Arch, Scottish Rite (where he is a Knight Commander Court of Honor), Shrine, and Red Cross of Constantine. He is a founding member of the Grand Chapter of the Widow Sons Motorcycle Club and the organizer of the Masonic Choir of Washington, DC.

Married to his partner of 42 years, Maryann, Mike is the proud father of two sons Michael Jr. and Matthew, and a grandfather of two to Davis (8) and Lainey (5). In his somewhat limited spare time, he enjoys motorcycles, landscape and portrait photography, historical reading, genealogy research, playing the acoustic guitar, pistol-shooting, and playing some very poor golf.

# FIRST LADY'S MESSAGE

---

*Dear Ladies and Significant Others of our Grand Lodge,*

We have not yet had the opportunity to all become acquainted. Although I had ambitious plans this year for us to meet in social settings and enjoy the company of each other, those plans are delayed for hopefully only a short time.

It is my honor to serve as the “First Lady” for the Grand Lodge of Washington DC this year. I have been married to the “Grand Master” for 42 years and, believe me, we got well into the 42d year before I ever called him that! Jackie Kennedy once famously said, “The one thing I do not want to be called is ‘First Lady.’ It sounds like a saddle horse.” So, I’m happy to just be called Maryann.

We have two sons and a daughter-in law of 9 years, and two awesome grandchildren Davis (8) and Lainey (6). Mike’s installation was on December 14. We had so many family and friends to fill the Scottish Rite that it was wonderful. He gave Brooke (our daughter-in-law) and me beautiful bouquets

of red and white carnations — a tradition for us that goes back to the Army, when red and white were the colors of the US Cavalry, in which Mike served.

Despite how long and utterly boring the installation can be, we were proud of the behavior of our grandchildren. Davis had the opportunity to make a presentation and a small speech, and he carried it off well for an 8-yr old. But the next morning at breakfast he gave us a dose of reality with, “...that was all quite boring yesterday, Pop...”

The following week, we hosted a dinner at the Almas Shrine for all Lodge Masters and their significant others. There was a great turnout, and I really enjoyed meeting many of you for the first time. It was also wonderful to see old friends.

In January, I had the opportunity to host a “First Lady’s Tea” (there’s that word again), and we had about 25 women in attendance at Almas Temple. It was great fun. The only mistake we made was to start in the bar with



*Maryann Nicholas, First Lady of the Grand Lodge of DC*

all of the men! It was like herding cats to get the ladies to move into the more-quiet nearby room for the formal tea part. But we had a lot of fun there, too, and we got a great group picture representing women power! It was another wonderful way for our ladies to get to know each other.



Ladies' Tea January 2020



With the Greek Patriarch inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem



At the Western Wall in Jerusalem

The rest of the story: The men were hungry, and the women wanted more drinks. Shortly after the end of the “tea”, the men had moved into the ladies’ area to clean out the left-overs, and the ladies were back in charge of the bar. And that’s the story of life.

One of the responsibilities (and benefit, of course) of being the spouse of the Grand Master, is to accompany him on travel and to represent our Grand Lodge at Masonic

events. In late January, we attended the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Israel, in Tel Aviv.

It was an experience to see how they conducted their events and to witness the courtesy they showed to guests from around the world. Another benefit was for the Grand Master and I to re-establish relationships with Grand Masters and spouses from parts of the world that we usually do not

see: Spain, Turkey, Montenegro, Russia, Romania, Serbia, and many others. The Grand Jurisdiction of Washington DC is justifiably well-respected throughout the world, and I’ve learned that the relationships we build during these events ensure the friendly exchange of information and cooperation.

After the Communication we took some time to see Jerusalem. It was enough to make

memories of a lifetime! We started with a quick tour of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Muslim Dome of the Rock (the famous “golden dome” of the city of Jerusalem). We then visited with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem (Catholic faith), an Archbishop who prayed with us and blessed us. That was followed by a personal tour of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by an Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox faith. The day finished with us praying with Jewish men and women (separately) at the Western Wall. Four major religions in one day!

In retrospect, we are of course grateful that we got to make that trip before all of the travel restrictions were put into place.

That trip was followed by the February Conference of Grand Masters of Masons and Grand Secretaries in North America. (Or CGMNA, for short.) We drove to Louisville KY for this event, and had so much fun learning about other places around the country. There was a breakout session for just the Ladies and Dr Maria Kontaridis MD PhD, from the Masonic Medical Research Institute in Utica NY talked about the effects of heart disease and diabetes and we were shown a way to pack your suitcase to save room, and so we were always learning something. Iris Gordon, the Deputy Grand Master’s wife, went on that trip too and so did some Past Grand Mater’s wives. We enjoyed fellowship and safety in numbers. And DC hosted a dinner for “Friends of DC” and we had a wonderful time there, too!

I sincerely hope that we get to do more family and ladies’ events soon! For many years I have been looking forward to the opportunity to organize events that help us get to know and love each other. For me, that is what Freemasonry means. I know that it does wonderful things for my husband, but the wonderful part for me are the many lifelong friends I have made.

Mike and I will keep you all in our prayers. We pray every day for the safety of the men and families of our Grand Lodge. Stay strong, be safe, help one another.

Sincerely,  
Maryann



Meeting with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem



# NEW JOINT DC MASONIC COVID RELIEF FUND FORMED

*By RWB Morgan Corr, Senior Grand Deacon and RWB Adam Tager, Junior Grand Deacon*

There is no doubt now that the COVID-19 epidemic will have a deep and lasting effect on our daily lives for the foreseeable future. Policies like social distancing and guidance from officials to stay home not only impact how we meet as Masons, but also on the health and livelihood of our members and their families.

The Grand Master has created a task force to confront this growing issue head-on, and has appointed us to coordinate these efforts. RWB Morgan Corr has been appointed the “COVID Czar,” and RWB Adam Tager has been appointed “Deputy COVID Czar” to lead and streamline masonic efforts. Together, with the help of the Grand Lodge office and the appropriate officers of our appendant bodies, this task force has already developed important new assistance initiatives.

The first of these initiatives is the establishment of the Joint Masonic COVID Relief Fund (Fund). The Fund consolidates multiple sources of Masonic relief such as the Grand Lodge, Masonic and Eastern Star Home (MESH) Charities, the Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star of DC, the Masonic Foundation of DC, St. John’s Mite, Columbia Commandery Knights Templar, and DC Scottish Rite Foundation into a central location, allowing for a central clearinghouse dedicated to virus-related relief efforts. This structure will also enable the Fund to nimbly react to situations as they develop, and to put their resources into direct action much faster than if each of the charitable entities were working separately as usual.

MESH Charities will be taking the lead facilitating these efforts, due to their already existing infrastructure, and the availability of a dedicated staff to provide real time support. Of course, they will be assisted as necessary by Grand Officers and the rest of the jurisdiction.

While MESH is the central point, this is a true all-hands effort.

The Fund centrally collects donations from individuals and Masonic bodies/organizations, and has in place an expedited process to provide funds, goods, and services for relief to brothers, sisters, and their immediate family. Those needs are assessed by collecting information from a relief form developed especially for this purpose. (If you or someone you know is in need, complete the form by visiting the Grand Lodge website: [dcgrandlodge.org/coronavirus-information](http://dcgrandlodge.org/coronavirus-information)). Please note this is for members of DC Masonic bodies only.

Once the form is submitted, a brother will contact the applicant as swiftly as possible, and an expedited relief process will begin. The goal being verifying what need is and matching the need up with available resources.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP IN THIS EFFORT!

Individual donations of any size will be of great help. You can donate money by visiting the Grand Lodge website:

[dcgrandlodge.org/coronavirus-information](http://dcgrandlodge.org/coronavirus-information)

The button there will allow donations through credit card, PayPal, ACH, and more. You may also mail checks made out to “MESH Charities” to 2800 16th St. NW Washington DC 20009.

You can also use the same link to donate goods that will be helpful to those in need, or your time to help with tasks such as grocery shopping or helping with a doctor visit.

Many hands make light work, and we can all pitch in some way. Many of your brothers, sisters, and close Masonic family will need your help, and will deeply appreciate it.



# THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE ELUDED HER

by Mark Dreisonstok, augmented with material from Philip Bonner

With her trembling hand, Marina reached out to the heavy curtain covering the door. It took her to new worlds, for as she passed through, she entered an abandoned garden. Partaking first of bread and wine, she brought forth from the books she had been reading a volume of astonishing Hermetic lore.

The book furnished many a secret formula and many sketches — which she was unable to understand — for procuring the Philosopher's Stone. Here before her were instructions for the creation of gold, but it was a formula as complex as harnessing two moons together in order to journey onwards towards the Sun.

— Translated from a passage of Achim von Arnim's *Isabella von Ägypten*

*What was the object of the aspirants to knowledge? They sought for the secret of the great work, or the Philosophal [sic] Stone... To find the Philosophal Stone, is to have discovered the Absolute...*

—ALBERT PIKE, MORALS AND DOGMA (LECTURE OF THE 28TH DEGREE)



**NEW MASONIC  
EDUCATION  
RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE  
NOW!**

We have created a new member resource section on our website, [dcgrandlodge.org](http://dcgrandlodge.org). It is the work product of the Masonic Education Committee and is accessed under: Lodges/Member Resources/Masonic Education. (The password is the same as the regular Member Resources page. If you need a reminder, contact your Secretary or the Grand Lodge office.)

Please have a look and encourage your brethren to visit, as well! This is a collection of very valuable information that has been compiled specifically for D.C. Masons.

# ANACOSTIA-PENTALPHA LODGE NO. 21

## A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY

---

*By permission of the Grand Master, Michael D. Nicholas, Sr., on January 1, 2020, the consolidation of Anacostia Lodge No. 21 and Osiris-Pentalpha Lodge No. 23 into the new Anacostia-Pentalpha Lodge No. 21 became official. In celebration of this new chapter in the history of these illustrious Lodges, what follows is a brief history of the two consolidating Lodges and a message concerning the consolidation and the future from the Master of the new Lodge. —ed.*

---

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANACOSTIA LODGE NO. 21

by WB Steven Higdon, PM  
Anacostia Lodge No. 21

On September 14th, 1868, seven Master Masons, residing in Uniontown formerly requested an endorsement from Naval Lodge, No. 4, of their petition to the Grand Master of Masons, District of Columbia, Benjamin B. French, for a dispensation to form a new Lodge, but for some unknown reason, Naval Lodge refused a recommendation, even though they conceded that the petitioners were all Master Masons in good standing. In working with the Grand Lodge and Naval Lodge No. 4 however, the formation was duly endorsed and a dispensation was granted, dated December 22, 1868, authorizing formation in Uniontown of a lodge to be known as Anacostia Lodge, and appointed Brother William F. Farish, as Master.

This dispensation was returned at the Communication of the Grand Lodge six days later (have you ever seen such a quick turnaround on anything Masonic?), and an order was made for the issuance of a charter, with the title of Anacostia Lodge, No. 21.

The institution of the Lodge took place March 8, 1869, at the Lodge room in Uniontown. The noted Masonic writer

and jurist, Brother Albert G. Mackey, was in attendance by invitation from the Grand Master, Robert B. Donaldson, who conducted the ceremony and installed the officers. Most Worshipful Brother W. F. Saunders, the Grand Master of the Montana Territory was also in attendance. The building where the meeting took place was a scrappy room above a blacksmith shop that was owned by David E. Haines. The rent for the space was \$100 per year.

*The future is bright for  
Anacostia-Pentalpha,  
and now is the time to  
double-down on what  
has made us successful.*

During the first Grand Lodge visitation on October 18th, 1869, members of Naval Lodge No. 4 acted as Master, Junior Deacon, and Tiler, while a member of Lebanon Lodge No. 7 (now William R. Singleton Hope-Lebanon Lodge No. 7) acted as Senior Deacon. It should be no surprise that a few weeks later, November 1st, 1869; a special communication was called to discuss the future of Anacostia Lodge. Some members of Federal Lodge No. 1 offered to confer degrees on Anacostia's behalf in order to help build membership, especially since the Lodge had recently received petitions for its first two candidates (Robert F. Martin and Frederick Stromberger). At the end of that meeting, the members pledged to do all they could to advance the prosperity of the Lodge. This renewed spirit must have been awesome to witness, but it was almost too late to matter.

The very next day at the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, the Grand Master said the following:

“I attended personally the visitations of each of the nineteen lodges now working under charters granted by the Grand Lodge, with but a single exception, I can speak of them as being not only in a generally prosperous condition, but individually prosperous and harmonious. The exception alluded to is Anacostia Lodge No. 21, held at Uniontown. As you are aware, the Charter to this Lodge was granted at our last December Communication on the application of seven worthy and properly vouched for Master Masons. Owing to various causes – one of which was the removal from Uniontown, of some of the Charter members – the lodge has not succeeded well since its institution. The present limited number of members able to attend its meetings and other circumstances familiar to you, lead me to the conclusion that the best interests of the jurisdiction are not subserved by a continued attempt to sustain a lodge in Uniontown. I, therefore, recommend that a Committee be appointed to investigate the affairs of Anacostia Lodge, and report at the next regular communication of the Grand Lodge, their judgment as to the propriety of revoking the charter under which the lodge is working.”

The report of this committee was submitted in January of 1870, and showed that the membership had become so depleted that it was almost impossible to open the Lodge; that no degrees could be conferred, and that the necessary furniture was lacking; and that the lodge was in debt. Perhaps the only saving graces were that it still contained a few energized brethren and that consideration for the report (for whatever reason) was postponed until the next Grand Lodge meeting four months later.

Again, it seems as though Naval Lodge No. 4, Lebanon Lodge No. 7, and Harmony Lodge No. 17, were key to the early success of Anacostia Lodge. They either donated or loaned many much-needed furnishings and other essentials for operating, maintaining, and (most importantly) growing a Masonic Lodge. After all, some will argue that the primary responsibility of a Masonic Lodge is not to teach a system of morality, not to give to charity, and certainly not to read the minutes, but to work toward guaranteeing future operations by making Masons. That might be a topic for another time, however.

At the May 1870 Grand Lodge communication, a motion was made by a Brother John Lockie with support from the Grand Secretary, Brother Noble D. Larner, to place the report in the Grand Lodge files and discharge the investigation committee. Consequently, both men were made honorary members of Anacostia Lodge in 1881, when Brother Larner served as Grand Master.

Another interesting note is that Mr. David E. Haines, the owner of the blacksmith shop where the lodge met, petitioned for the degrees in that same year. While purely speculation, one would assume that a lodge with money troubles could benefit from claiming their landlord as a member.

During those times, the biggest fundraisers for the Lodge were water excursions. They would charter boats and take trips to various places, such as Norfolk and Blackstone Island, during which dinner would be served. In fact, the Excursion Committee was a principle body for many of those early years.

Brother Robert Morris sent a letter to the Lodge in April of 1875, desiring to schedule a time to present his lecture on the Holy Land. Brother Morris was the second man to be crowned “Poet Laureate of Freemasonry” and was also the creator of the Order of the Eastern Star. Unfortunately, it appears as though the letter was either ignored or forgotten, and the lecture never took place. I’ll blame the secretary, since he certainly isn’t around to defend himself.

On March 11th, 1880, Anacostia’s first candidate for the degrees of Masonry,

Brother Robert F. Martin, suddenly passed away from pneumonia. He was laid to rest with Masonic services in the famous Congressional Cemetery on March 14th. During Brother Martin’s relatively short Masonic career, he served several years as Treasurer for Anacostia Lodge.

In the 1955–1956 Masonic year, Anacostia lodge boasted a historic year in membership. The roles listed 1,336 brothers and 45 men were raised to the Sublime degree of Master Mason. At that time, only Naval No. 4 had more members. Who was Master of that historic year for the lodge? It was Worshipful Brother Charles C. Weaver, father to our current Chaplain, Worshipful Brother C. Richard Weaver, who laid down his working tools to take his place in the Celestial Lodge above in April of 2014.

Our Fidelity Medal holder, Most Worshipful Brother Robert F. Drechsler, was raised in 1954 and joined the officer line in 1962. He was certainly a member of the lodge during its membership peak, and you can read more about his illustrious Masonic Career elsewhere in this publication.

Throughout the beginning portions of our Lodge’s history book, Anacostia No. 21 is compared to a child. When we were chartered, the child was born, and throughout the early years, it was considered to be weak. As time progressed, the child became stronger and self-sustaining. I however, like to think of Anacostia Lodge No. 21 not as a child, but as a tree. (Pretty sure MWB Drechsler would approve of this analogy! —ed.) It started as an idea, or as a seed that was planted in Uniontown. At first, its roots were shallow, and nobody knew if it would survive. Through the help of the Grand Architect of the Universe, other Lodges, and extreme passion, the tree’s roots took hold and it was able to grow. Some seasons have been good to our tree, and some winters have been harsh. As the years and generations pass by, the history of our Lodge, or its roots, continue to grow deeper and stronger, making it more resilient to drought, storm, and disease.

We have a strong history at Anacostia, and we can leverage the lessons of the

past to help us make better decisions for the future. We can capture some of the hope and gumption of Brothers Benjamin F. Wilkins, William F. Farish, John R. McConnell, Charles S. Wheeler, George H. Martin, John H. Wheeler and John Cruickshank. We can exemplify the support and charity we received from other Lodges, as well as the countless Brothers that allowed its continued growth. We have a rich lineage and legacy in this jurisdiction that will always sustain us, as long as we have the wisdom to realize it.

.....  
**A BRIEF HISTORY OF PENTALPHA LODGE NO. 23**

*by WB Tony Murray, PM  
Osiris-Pentalpha Lodge No. 23*

Pentalpha Lodge No. 23 was duly established, constituted, and organized in the City of Washington on May 4th, 1869. There were 57 charter members, and the story of the first meeting that led to the organization of the Lodge is not without interest.

It was held at the residence of Brother Joseph Daniels, on the Northeast corner of New York Ave. and 13th Street, NW on January 28th, 1869, and was attended by 25 brothers. Many new names for the new Lodge were discussed including Capital, Capital City, Unity, Mt. Vernon, Fidelity, King Solomon and Excelsior. The meetings of the new Lodge would be on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, but on July 5th, 1869 this was changed to the 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month and remained unchanged for many years.

The charter was asked for by Washington Centennial and Lafayette Lodge, and Capital was the name selected. The first regular meeting under dispensation was held at Central Masonic Hall, at the southwest corner of Ninth and D Streets, NW, on February 10th, 1869, when the name PENTALPHA was finally agreed upon. Also on this date the following officers were chosen;

Joseph Daniels, WM  
John W. Griffin, SW  
Lewis G. Stephens, JW

James C. Poynton, Sec.  
 H. O. Hood, Treas.  
 Charles E. Coon, SD  
 B. W. Brown, JD  
 John C. Stewart, SS  
 Charles C. Casey, JS  
 Leonard Stoddard, of Dawson #16, Tiler

The first Master Mason raised in Pentalpha Lodge was Brother W. C. Fechtig, a printer, on July 5th, 1869. The first petition received after the charter was granted was from Martin Leese, a market dealer, and the first for affiliation was Brother W. M. Tilleston from B. B. French Lodge No. 15, where many of the early members came from. Pentalpha Lodge was nick named the “Kid-gloved Lodge” because it was the habit that on special occasions, G. L. visitation, etc., the members would appear in dress suits, lamb skin aprons and with kid gloves.

James A. Garfield, the twentieth President of the United States was a charter member of Pentalpha Lodge. Another charter member was Norton P. Chipman, who entered the Union Army and became a Brigadier General, settled in the city, and was appointed Secretary of the Territorial Government of the District of Columbia. Soon after, he was elected to the 42nd & 43rd Congresses as a Republican. He later moved to California and went into the lumber business.

The first father and son to serve as Worshipful Masters of Pentalpha Lodge was that of WB Joseph Daniels, the first Worshipful Master of Pentalpha Lodge in 1869/1870 and his son, WB Frank G. Daniels in 1874.

Pentalpha Lodge has had many famous Honorary members. To name a few: MWB Benjamin B. French, PGM of DC; MWB, H. P. H. Bromwell, PGM of Illinois and noted Masonic Author of the late 1800’s; the Right Honorable Lord Tenterden, an eminent British Diplomat and Mason; and of course, Theodore Roosevelt the former President of the United States was an honorary member. Finally, while not a member, MWB Harry S. Truman, PGM of Missouri, and President of the United States, visited Pentalpha Lodge many times when in Washington.

Members of Osiris/Pentalpha #23 who served as Grand Master:

MWB Jose M. Yznaga	1887
Matthew Trimble	1897
William W. Jermane	1916
James A. West	1930
Ara M. Daniels	1941
Jerold J. Samet	1992
Daniel Fredrick	1999

Another Charter member of Pentalpha Lodge was William R. Singleton who served as the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia from 1876 to 1901 (25 years, longest serving), when he served 23 Grand Masters, including two from Pentalpha No. 23.

WB Edgar E. Bageant served as Grand Lecturer from 1945 to 1958 (14 years). RWB Stafford Apple served as Grand Lecturer for 10 years, RWB Joel Khan was Grand Lecturer for 7 years. At present RWB Christopher K. “Chip” Mahaney has served as Grand Lecturer for the past 13 years. So, you could say that Osiris/ Pentalpha No. 23 is the Lodge of Grand Lecturer’s.

On December 3rd, 1984 Trinity Lodge No. 41 consolidated their membership with Pentalpha Lodge No. 23 with the permission of Grand Master James M. Burns, creating a new Lodge which became Pentalpha-Trinity Lodge No. 23.

Then, on December 12th, 1988 Osiris Lodge No. 26 consolidated their membership with Pentalpha-Trinity No. 23 with the permission of Grand Master Raymond F. McMullen to create another new Lodge which became Osiris-Pentalpha Lodge No. 23, which it has operated as until 2020.

.....

**A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE CONSOLIDATION AND THE FUTURE OF ANACOSTIA-PENTALPHA LODGE NO. 21**

*By WB Geoffrey Newman  
 Master, Anacostia-Pentalpha Lodge No. 21*

The message of my piece of this article will not be one of organizational politics, but instead one on thinking differently about ourselves in respect to the outside community. Recently, we have seen the

formation of several new Lodges with very unique identities. However, what we have not seen is the consolidation or merger of many Lodges. Why is this? Are we unsure of how the more tenured Brothers will feel?

As you have already read, the story of Anacostia and Osiris-Pentalpha Lodges is one of a very long history that dates back to just after the civil war. Our Lodges have seen 25 different Presidents, several wars, and countless American achievements. Having such a long history in the jurisdiction, you may wonder how we have even managed to get to where we are today. The truth is, consolidating the Lodges was the healthiest way to build our future and bring together key parts from both Lodges. We shouldn’t be afraid to ask the hard questions and if necessary, make the difficult decisions.

The most difficult questions we had to ask ourselves in Anacostia Lodge were introspective. We had to ask if our current strategies were inhibiting our growth as a Lodge. It took about two years and weekly conversations to answer this question. We ultimately realized that for us to thrive, we needed to be involved deeply in one or two aspects of our communities. We also understood that to grow organically we had to identify individuals with our same mentality; those who are proactive and passionate about the fellowship. It was then that we were presented with the option to consolidate with Osiris-Pentalpha Lodge No. 23. Understandably, it was not an easy pill to swallow. Recognizing one’s own shortcomings is never easy. But after several conversations, we saw that the pieces of the puzzle would fit together perfectly. One thing we made clear was that in the process of the consolidation, we would not need their money.

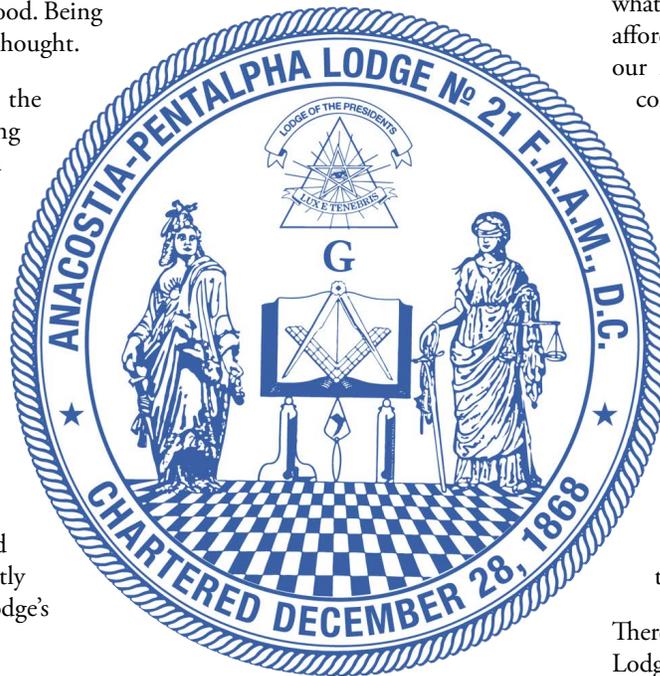
Osiris-Pentalpha had everything that we needed to reinvigorate the Lodge. The “OP” brethren were very focused on charity, were logistically sound, financially stable, excellent with ritual, and most importantly, they had a culture of fellowship. Anacostia has the same culture, but due to an influx of new members, we were in need of help with ritual work. Luckily, our officer corps would even fit together as we were missing the pieces they had to offer.

Culture will always be the driving force during the consolidation of Lodges. If our Lodges differed in culture, the consolidation never would have been possible. When a Lodge examines the possibility of a consolidation, the committees are viewed as one joint venture, rather than separate committees on each side of the table. This could not have been a negotiation where “company A” is buying “company B.” The committees our Lodges had built met as one and discussed the consolidation topics together. I was told by a member of the committee that it felt as if we were one group fighting for the common good. Being separate Lodges became an afterthought.

One challenge during the committee process was figuring out finances. So, we confronted this task by carefully choosing each member of the team. The consolidation committee members were selected based on their professional skill set, or a particular passion. The skill sets ranged from finance & management, legal experience to understand the code and by-law modifications, public relations to help craft the message for our Brethren and community partners, and lastly a historian to ensure both Lodge’s history would be preserved.

The committees met for most of 2019 and discussed all the logistics ranging from why this would be a good idea, to motives for consolidation. They touched on finances, education, by-laws, memberships, community involvement, Lodge seals, and ultimately the name. After the first few meetings it was evident that everyone met on common ground and the task was easier than originally thought. The consolidation committee’s final report was well above expectations and they were able to calm any fears remaining from the sideline. After all of our hard work, both Lodges voted unanimously in favor of the consolidation. (Normally it’s hard to get 100% of the vote in favor of a simple donation to one of the youth groups, so this vote left me speechless.)

As Master of Anacostia Lodge, I had to maintain an unbiased opinion and let the committee work. The committee started with addressing concerns instead of opinions. Once they tackled the concerns, they could then change opinions about the thought of consolidation. The final report covered pages of concerns and input from both sides. It was detailed and well-presented and left little questioning about any negatives. All negatives were already addressed with action steps on how to overcome or mitigate them.



Our plans for 2020 will be a continuation of 2019, focusing heavily on a select few community charities and social events to meet potential candidates. By actively engaging in charity work and inviting non-masons to events, we have seen a 10% rise in membership. For all future events, we will show up in numbers and try to engage our families if possible. Despite the fact that it only matters internally, it is invigorating seeing over 20 Masons at our meetings again.

After polling our newer Brothers and asking why they petitioned the consolidation, they said it was due to our high attendance and support at events. We made sure they

felt part of a larger whole and that we were willing to listen to their voices and mentor them. So all committees have a “senior” member of Anacostia-Pentalpha and a newer Brother as Chairman. This serves as a mentoring process and leadership incubator to keep the line fully progressive with no repeat Masters. These simple changes have given us the opportunity to develop a younger Lodge that is social, charitable, and fun.

The future is bright for Anacostia-Pentalpha, and now is the time to double-down on what has made us successful. We can’t afford to be complacent; we need to teach our newer Brethren to be leaders in the community and to follow the blueprint of the last five years. This will guarantee our Lodge to organically grow and hopefully double in under ten years. This is the attitude of the new and improved No. 21 and we will do our best to support others in the jurisdiction. If we continue to grow and be viewed positively in the community it would mean that Masons across the jurisdiction will be viewed the same. This will lead to more growth for us all since the general public does not know the difference between the different Lodges.

There is no “one size fits all” fix to a struggling Lodge. Some will create new Lodges, while others might choose to surrender the charter. But rather than dissolve or start anew, we looked to our peers and saw a group that could best work and best agree, and rather than weakening two Lodges that were rebounding or stable, we consolidated our gains and brought our talents together. There is strength in numbers, and it’s proving to pay dividends for us. It’s not a guarantee that this method will work for all Lodges, but we highly encourage an open discussion in an unbiased forum. If you have questions about the process or the challenges associated with it, please reach out to us. We would like nothing more than to be a positive example in the jurisdiction and we are looking forward to what the future holds.

# HOW THE GREEKS AND FRENCH DWELT IN UNITY

*WM Pedro L. Guerrero (Benjamin B. French Lodge No. 15), WM John A. Zevitas (Wm. Singleton-Hope-Lebanon Lodge No. 7) and Adam Goldman, PM (Orator, Benjamin B. French Lodge No. 15)*

There's an old saying credited to MWB Benjamin Franklin, "if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail." In recognition of that simple truth — and as Worshipful Master-elects of our respective lodges — we wanted to plan for success during our years in the East by planning to provide our members with, among other things, thought-provoking programs to enrich their Masonic experiences. When considering how to kick off the year's Masonic education, we first asked ourselves, how can we get the most bang for our buck? In other words, what type of programs and speakers could we realistically get that would give us the best chance of packing the sidelines and creating a memorable Lodge experience?

Masonic education programs are just one of the hundreds of things Master-elects must consider as they plan out their year in the East and, when done successfully, can set the momentum for all good things to come!

On February 5th and 6th of this year, we put MWB Franklin's philosophy into practice when William R. Singleton-Hope-Lebanon Lodge No. 7 (Singleton) and Benjamin B. French Lodge No. 15 (BBF) teamed up to host a two-part lecture series on Masonic Astrology and Mythology by world-renowned author, Bro. Jaime Paul Lamb. Counted among the attendees those two nights were over 100 Masons and their invited guests, our Grand Master, MWB Michael D. Nicholas, Sr., several Grand Lodge Officers, and many other Past Masters and Past Grand Masters. We even hosted several Masonic brethren from around the globe! In terms of getting the word out, that part of our planning was a resounding success.

The large turnouts weren't by happenstance; however, they were the result of a lot of behind-the-scenes hard work by many brothers in both Lodges. Collaboration was certainly key, and it was amazing to see how naturally it came to the members of our Lodges. We have outlined below some of the things that other Master-elects may consider as they approach this type of joint program during their years in the Oriental Chair.



BBF 15's WM. Guerrero thanks Bro. Lamb for a great lecture and presents him with the BBF 15 coin.

## ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY

A successful program doesn't simply evolve overnight. As the twenty-four inch gauge teaches us, time is limited and preparation is key to a Master making the most of his time in the East. Singleton and BBF began planning, separately, for their 2020 masonic calendars over a year in advance. As part of that preparation, both of our Lodges examined attendance records, conducted interviews, and distributed general membership surveys. Those activities made one thing abundantly clear, our brothers were clamoring for esoteric presentations. More specifically, we found that esoteric topics, paired with an examination of our ancient Masonic roots, received the lion's share of votes. The only thing missing was finding a way to bring together more members of our extended Masonic family.

So, to complete the trifecta, we knew we had to find a Lodge that met around the same time and see if we could make it a family affair.

This was how the idea of Jaime Lamb's lecture series was born and the beginning of our plans to succeed — together.

## FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

Our separate findings were just academic exercises until Singleton's then-Senior Warden, John Zevitas, began to make known his Greek-focused programming intentions to the broader Masonic network. Soon after, BBF's Orator WB Adam Goldman, caught wind of Zevitas's programming intentions and recognized the awesome potential of a collaboration.

As BBF's Orator, Goldman knew that his Master-elect, Pedro Gurrero, was planning an education program titled, "How Mason Truth-Seekers Search for Answers." It was obvious that there was a lot of potential synergy between the two Master-elects' programs. After initial discussions, WB Goldman proposed the ideal speaker that was well-versed enough to lecture on both Masonic astrology and Greek mythology — Bro. Jaime Paul Lamb. With the broad strokes laid out, representatives from both Lodges met at the September 2019 Leadership Conference and started putting designs upon the trestleboard — a two-part lecture series held back-to-back at each lodge's February Stated Communications.

The topic of Bro. Lamb's lecture at BBF on February 5th was "Freemasonry, the Anno Lucis and the Taurian Age." In that lecture, Bro. Lamb covered much of the amazing research that went into his book, "Myth, Magick & Masonry" which reveals many of the Craft's connections to classical mythology, the ancient Mysteries, and the Western Esoteric Tradition (i.e. "magick").



For Singleton's February 6th event, the lecture was titled "Freemasonry and Greek Mythology." In that talk, Bro. Lamb specifically focused on the mythology, folklore, and epic poetry of Ancient Greeks and how the Greek mysteries have been secreted in the ritual and symbolism of our Gentle Craft.

### BALANCING THE LOAD

Planning a two-part program with a speaker that lives 2,000 miles away is no easy feat — financially or logistically. Yet, when the members of BBF and Singleton came together as one, we all reaped the rewards. In addition to splitting the costs to host the speaker, our combined efforts spread out the workload. Both Lodges were able to task certain members with assignments best suited for their particular skills—in other words, we didn't have to teach old dogs new tricks. For example, we identified brothers from our membership that had expertise or strengths in hotel/flight arrangements, graphic design, and event promotion. This alone saved both our Lodges significant time and resources that could be used for other projects and events.

Without a doubt, the greatest benefit of working together was the sense of community we built in the planning and execution of the events. It was truly inspiring to witness members from our two Lodges working and visiting one another as part of the agreed-upon framework. It was also amazing to host representatives from over 12 Lodges, 5 states, and 2 foreign countries (Argentina & Israel). Additionally, by opening the programs to non-Masonic invited guests, it allowed us to foster a sense

of "good will" by including many individuals from the community, spouses, parents, and friends. Since the series concluded, we have experienced increased interest in our Lodges and programs.

### IT'S NOT ALL RAINBOWS AND UNICORNS (UNTIL IT IS)

There are always challenges to co-hosting events, and we knew that this could result in troubles caused by individual preferences, working styles, project coordination, and egos—but our fears were all for naught! In our collaboration, we honestly didn't have any of those issues, and in fact, it was kind of effortless. It was scary how all was. There was even a "kumbaya-factor" that we didn't expect. We all just enjoyed working together, bringing light to our respective Lodges, and hosting an amazing speaker! We also think that some of the success can be attributed to the fact that we had separate events connected by common efforts and themes. All in all, it really was all rainbows and unicorns.



### STRONGER TOGETHER

Without a doubt, our two lodges were stronger together. By collaborating, we were able to host one of the most knowledgeable and renowned esoteric Masonic scholars on Earth. And through our coordinated publicity efforts, which included the Grand Lodge newsletter, and use of its social media platforms, we were able to attract a wide audience for both presentations.



Singleton Lodge members with Brother Lamb and MWGM as they visited BBF 15.



WB. Adam introducing Bro. Lamb to a full house.



Brother Lamb presenting at Singleton to a full house.

Truly, one of the most gratifying parts of our collaboration was the fostering of fraternal relationships between our two Lodges — reminding us of Psalm 133, "[b]ehold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity." The other amazing part was, of course, providing meaningful Masonic education to our members and hosting Bro. Lamb. Together, we had a plan to succeed, and it bore fruit for each and every one of us — and that, my Brothers, is what Freemasonry's all about!

# BONSAI BOB

*By Jason Van Dyke, PM (Managing Editor)*



Bonsai at the National Botanical Gardens



*In 1625 A.D., just a year after King James I created the royal colony of Virginia and nine years after the reunification of Japan under the famous Shogun (military dictator) Tokugawa Ieyasu, a simple tree was planted in a Japanese nursery. Hundreds of years later, that simple tree would unite two vastly different cultures in two vastly different events, and a D.C. Grand Master would play an integral role in one of them.*

---

Orphaned at the age of two, Robert Drechsler was born on April 9, 1933, in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC. He was raised in the German Orphan Home, along with several other of his nine brothers and sisters. While being orphaned at such a young age was, in his words, “not ideal,” his new home was far from the Dickensian prison we might equate with orphanages. In fact, he and his siblings were lovingly cared for at the home, and it was in their garden in front of the house that Bob first fell in love with plants.

He remembers those days in the garden most fondly. While they grew tomatoes and other food for the home as a practicality, they also planted flowers and trees to landscape the yard. In the garden he was taught how to care for and nurture plants, and it was an activity that gave him great joy and solace as he watched the crops he was responsible for thrive. It would become his first love, in fact.

After graduating Anacostia High School, he attended the University of Maryland, where he studied Floriculture. During high school and college, he was an active member of DeMolay, and in early June of 1954, two short months after his twenty-first birthday, he was initiated an Entered Apprentice Mason in his local Lodge — Anacostia Lodge No. 21. Two years later in 1956, he graduated from the University of Maryland

with his Bachelor of Arts degree in Floriculture. Then in 1957, he was drafted into the Army.

While his aptitude tests directed him towards Intelligence as a cryptographer and signals officer, it was his demonstrated aptitude on the clarinet (an instrument he played through high school and college) that earned him a place in an Army Band, instead. He was stationed in Atlanta and got to march in several major parades and celebrations. (After moving back to DC late in his Army career, he marched in the inauguration of JFK—a highlight of Bob’s time in the band, and one of his favorite memories.)

In 1959, Bob was transitioned into the “Active Reserves” of the Army and made a short attempt at graduate school, which didn’t suit him. Instead, he went to work for the National Arboretum as a Biological Aide. This allowed him to continue his work in the garden, but this time he could make a career out of the work.

Bob’s first years at the National Arboretum were slow. He researched ornamental shrubs, which consisted of long, lonely days in a lab, repeatedly splicing and breeding various plant specimens. But while for others the work was tedious and boring, Bob discovered he possessed a unique knack for this type of work. The solitary nature of the lab never really



Bob and three of his brothers on the steps of the German Orphan Home



1957 Ft Jackson SC 3rd Army Band

bothered him. In fact, he found he had the patience and perseverance to block out any distractions around him and focus on the work at hand. Unbeknownst to Bob, it was a skill set that that closely matched one of the world's oldest botanical artforms — the Japanese art of bonsai.

## A NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MINIATURE

For those familiar with James Clavell's novel and subsequent mini-series *Shōgun*, the beginning of the Edo Period in feudal Japan (1603–1868) is one of the most romantic periods in Japanese history. And while Europe was in the middle of its Renaissance period, Japan was flourishing as a regional power. The samurai of this time (Japan's warrior class and highest caste) and their chivalric code of Bushidō, ruled over a remarkably structured and disciplined civilization.

Bushidō (“the way of the warriors”), was a collection of moral and social rules-of-conduct that defined the ideal of “honor” to the Samurai. It demanded these warriors not only seek to constantly improve their martial prowess, but also to develop their cultural, political, and philosophical skills with equal vigor. This meant that while a typical samurai would devote significant portions of his day to exercise and martial arts, he would also spend an equal portion of his day reading and writing poetry or tending his garden in quiet

reflection. It was a philosophy closely related to Zen Buddhism and its emphasis on meditation, self-reflection, and a focus on the details of one's actions in search of the perfection of one's self.

This philosophy extended to the other castes, as well. Potters, smiths, and other craftsman practiced the same fanatical attention to detail and solitary focus on perfection in their art. And nowhere besides sword-making was this better manifested than in the ancient art of Bonsai — the art of growing miniaturized trees in pots.

Bonsai is an old tradition (the earliest bonsai were depicted in Japanese scrolls from 1195), which probably originated in China in the 6th century as a necessity, due to the lack of space in densely crowded cities where few people had “backyards” big enough for trees. The Chinese called it penjing, and their trees took on a sculptured and freer-style look than that of the Japanese bonsai trees. The Japanese trees, in contrast, were more natural looking and smaller, and their style was much more formal than that of penjing. Today, these trees are revered as a high art form in Japan. One, belonging to the Emperor himself, and once tended to by Tokugawa Ieyasu's son and successor as Shogun, Iemitsu, is even listed as a protected National Treasure of Japan.

Practically, the life of a bonsai can begin as a seedling, or as a cutting from a tree or another plant (it may be surprising to learn that a bonsai doesn't have to be a tree). Depending on the region, the plant could be a pine, a juniper, a fruit-bearing tree, or a shrub like an azalea. The cutting or seedling is planted in a training pot and carefully tended as it grows into an immature sapling.

After the plant begins to develop its root system, the bonsai master begins his “training” by clipping the roots, in part to constrain the plant's growth. He tends to the plant regularly for years before it begins to show its natural shape and form, after which he continues to trim the roots, turn the tree for symmetrical exposure to sunlight, and sometimes use wires and strategic pruning techniques to consciously shape its branches, trunk, foliage, and overall appearance. The best bonsai masters have eyes that see far into the future, able to see the results of 50 or more years of training with one quick glance.

The care and shaping of these plants is a time consuming and laborious process that spans decades, but the care and dedication a bonsai master shows his creation results in a natural-looking miniaturized tree with a dramatically longer life than its wild relatives, not to mention a value that can reach thousands of dollars, depending on its age and aesthetic beauty.

The most valuable examples are decades and even centuries old. The oldest living bonsai in Japan is over 1,000 years old, and there are several that date to around 800 years old. However, in the second tier of age (300 to 500-years-old), there is a tree that, regardless of age, is perhaps the most interesting.

The Japanese White Pine known as the Yamaki Pine (named after the family of bonsai masters that was responsible for its care for many generations), was planted around 1625, though we know



An example of Chinese Penjing



A samurai poses with his bonsai



Courtesan with bonsai



A samurai poses with his bonsai

little of its early life. We do know, however, that it was kept in the family nursery just outside Hiroshima, and that the tree was quietly loved and cared for, centuries before the city would become synonymous with disaster.

### A REMARKABLE SURVIVOR

At 8:15 am on August 6, 1945, the American B-29 bomber, Enola Gay, released the first atomic bomb ever used in war over Hiroshima. Just over 44-seconds later, a 16-Kiloton blast erupted just over the Shima Surgical Clinic. It incinerated everything within a one-mile radius and started fires across 4.4 square miles. It killed 70,000–80,000 people, or about 30% of the total population of Hiroshima, instantly and injured another 70,000.



Total destruction—Hiroshima after the bomb

The total destruction stretched over an almost-unbelievable 4.7 square miles of completely leveled city, and the radiation and fallout would go on to kill thousands more in the years that followed. It was the single most terrible display of killing power the world would ever see — until the next bomb was dropped over Nagasaki three days later.

At the Yamaki nursery in Hiroshima, the blast blew out every window of the home and injured every family member — though they all miraculously survived without permanent injury. More impressive, the ancient white pine also survived, protected by a high brick wall around the nursery.

In the days and years that followed this horrific event, the city of Hiroshima slowly rebuilt. And the Yamaki family went back to doing what they had done for countless generations before growing and caring for their nursery filled with potted trees.

Thirty-one years later, in July of 1976, the United States celebrated the Bicentennial of its Declaration of Independence. This milestone event led to a shower of gifts from foreign nations. One under-the-radar gift came the previous year from Japan: 53 bonsai trees from the Nippon Bonsai Association, including one incredible survivor with a hidden historical connection to the United States. They would be the start of the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection at the National Arboretum. But the new and fragile collection would need a curator — one with patience, focus, and great skill working with woody plants.

## BONSAI BOB

Bob was happy in the lab at the Arboretum. He had quietly labored for 17 years researching crabapples, crepe myrtle, pyracantha, and other woody plants while assisting the famous horticulturalist Dr. Donald Egolf, a Rhodes Scholar in Horticultural Studies. Together, they were working on the development of superior new cultivars — the product of careful breeding and selection, when in 1975, word came to the Arboretum of the bonsai gift. Bob was in the right place at the right time, with right set of skills, and was quickly named as the first curator of the collection.

When the plants arrived later that year at Baltimore-Washington International Airport, they were offloaded and initially inspected. Then the cargo was immediately taken to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Plant Introduction Station in Glenn Dale, Maryland for a one-year quarantine while a suitable pavilion on the Arboretum grounds was built and Bob went about learning the finer points of bonsai care and cultivation.

While he was a respected horticulturist at the Arboretum, he had no experience with Bonsai, so he would have to learn on the fly. It was a big job, and he knew he would need help. So, he turned to volunteers from the local Potomac Bonsai Association. In particular, two ladies from the Association with years of invaluable bonsai experience stepped in to help him get up to speed: Ruth Lamanna and Janet Laman.

Lamanna was already caring for another state gift of bonsai: five immature bonsai plants that were given to President Nixon during his famous trip to China, which were housed in White House's roof-top greenhouse. She immediately recommended a pavilion for the 53 new plants, which to her pleasant surprise was already being built at the National Arboretum.

Bob's other mentor, Janet Laman, learned the art of bonsai in New York from Yuji Yoshimura, the foremost bonsai master in the United States (later, Yoshimura would see his name enshrined on the Yuji Yoshimura Educational Center at the National Arboretum though generous gifts from his family and friends). Fortuitously, Laman's husband had recently been transferred to the Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, and she had already connected with Ruth Lamanna through mutual bonsai contacts.

Together, these ladies were instrumental in helping to set the early guidelines for the care and cultivation of the new collection. In fact, no one at the Arboretum had any of the specialized experience they did, and they generously gave of their time to teach and guide Bob and his staff of volunteers what they needed to know.

Then, in October of 1975, Emperor Hirohito and Empress Kōjun of Japan made a state visit to the White House, and one of Bob's first official duties as Curator of the National Bonsai Collection was to deliver a tree to the private living quarters of President Gerald Ford's White House. The tree he delivered came directly from the Emperor's personal collection as part of the major gift from Japan,



Bob at work with his assistant curator

so it was thought he might fancy seeing the tree again when he visited the White House.

According to Bob, he waited at the door on the South Portico while he was told that security would be with him in a minute to inspect the pot and clear the tree for entrance. He only waited a few minutes when the White House gardener intervened and simply said, "Never mind this, let's just take it upstairs." (Security at the White House was different in those days...)

By 1977, Bob was firmly in control of the collection and the Director of the Arboretum, Dr. John Creech, sent him to Japan on a five-week mission to learn first-hand about how the Japanese practiced the art of bonsai. Bob traveled the country, visiting nurseries and meeting and learning from the greatest bonsai artists in the world while being treated as an important visiting dignitary. Dr. Creech had arranged much of this with the Japanese, knowing that Bob would never have sought any glory for his work on his own, even though he richly deserved it.

Caring for the collection wasn't the only thing Bob did as curator. He also started to develop his own bonsai for the Arboretum. He soon found out just how difficult it was, and like all new bonsai masters, he experienced the high failure rate that comes with working with the fickle plants. Sometimes, he would care for a plant for years, only to see all his hard work dashed when it would die for some simple reason like being left without water for a day. But again, Bob's careful dedication, patience, and perseverance took over as he learned from each failure and methodically improved his technique with each new effort.

Over the following years, Bob enjoyed great successes as the curator of this unique collection, and he became affectionately known as "Bonsai Bob" by his colleagues and friends as each year, the collection he managed and nurtured became more prestigious as it collected more donations and represented the work of more important growers in a steady upward trend.

Then, in 1996, after over 40-years of service to the Arboretum and his government, he retired to pursue, full-time, another of his life-long activities: Freemasonry.



Worshipful Master of Anacostia Lodge, 1969



GM Visits Anacostia



President Ford and Emperor Hirohito in Washington, 1975



GM Drexler dedicates the memorial



GM Drexler dedicates the memorial

## METRO 2

**DR. GRIDLOCK**

### The Jolts On Metro

By Ben Shaffer

**D**id Dr. Gridlock... Metro trains often come to a stop with a series of repeated jerks and jolts. Even if you believe the train has finally stopped and it's safe to walk toward the doors, another big jolt will throw you across the aisle.

You can't tell the unexcused commuter from the tourist by when they decide to stand up and wait for the doors to open. The tourist will usually get fang or couple feet before desperately grabbing for a handrail.

When the cars are crowded, everyone has to hold on to the rails for their own life. This is not always possible, and I have been on both one-trodding and one-trodding and one-trodding as well as complete spills.

In these jerking the drivers can do to prevent those jolts? It seems some days, drivers or train are better than others. Is the problem mechanically irreparable? If so, passengers should be warned of the danger.

**STEPHANIE WELLS**  
Arlington

You've figured a problem. Stephanie Wells has been aware that some of its train lurch to a halt and now has announced the problem as a defective mechanical in the braking system of some cars. Metro is replacing those defective components and aspects to finish this project.

Most Metro train cars are controlled by computer, and the operators have to ride in the train stop. The brakes on all cars are electronically applied, but the microchip problem seems isolated to the newer model cars, which are

See GRIDLOCK, K2, Col. 1

Curian Robert F. Drexler, who refers to bonsai as an "ancient art," attends to the bark of a 135-year-old Stewartia.

### Small Bundles Of Display Joy

Display Reflects Popularity of Bonsai

By Pat Durkin

**A** miniature West Coast... The trees collected... include trees as old as 300 years and some of the most comprehensive Bonsai collections in the Western Hemisphere.

"We are just beginning to come into our own in this area and I feel certain Robert F. Drexler, Chinese and Japanese grove have produced Bonsai masterpieces for centuries, but U.S. growers did not begin experimenting until the 1950s."

Buller who occupied Japan after World War II brought back members of the first tree and inspired a few West Coast part-time hobbyists.

The collection is the result of three Bonsai collectors housed at the arboretum. A Japanese collection of approximately 50 trees was given to the Arboretum people in 1976 to celebrate the country's bicentennial. In 1987 a donation of 31 Chinese miniature trees became part of the collection.

The trees collected, which include trees as old as 300 years and some of the most comprehensive Bonsai collections in the Western Hemisphere.

"We are just beginning to come into our own in this area and I feel certain Robert F. Drexler, Chinese and Japanese grove have produced Bonsai masterpieces for centuries, but U.S. growers did not begin experimenting until the 1950s."

Buller who occupied Japan after World War II brought back members of the first tree and inspired a few West Coast part-time hobbyists.

The collection is the result of three Bonsai collectors housed at the arboretum. A Japanese collection of approximately 50 trees was given to the Arboretum people in 1976 to celebrate the

See BONSAI, K2, Col. 6



Opening of the North American Collection of Bonsai, 1990

## THE GRAND MASTER

Most Worshipful Brother Robert Drechsler was installed as Grand Master of Masons in the District of Columbia on the evening of December 14, 1996. It was the culmination of many years of dedicated, selfless work on his part that started when he was a DeMolay in Anacostia Chapter, where he served as that Chapter's Master Councilor in 1953.

But interestingly, Bob never really thought about being Grand Master. In fact, he never asked to run for the Grand line. He was recruited by a few Past Grand Masters who asked if he would run, and his answer was always the same, "If someone wants to nominate me, I won't say no." He thought this would be an easy way out — someone would nominate him, and he'd lose. That would be the end of it.

Instead, he was nominated and then shocked when he was easily elected. For those that knew him, though, this was just a continuation of the theme Bob had developed through his life — he was a worker first, then a leader. Every organization he joined (and there are many of them), he was focused on working hard and leading by example. His friend Dutch Albert, the Worshipful Master of Anacostia Lodge in the year Bob was Grand Master, said at his testimonial banquet, "I could write a book [about Bob] and every page would be filled with gems of friendship and service to humanity, with his dedication to tasks as a volunteer and to those tasks assigned, with his grateful acceptance of the duties of the various offices he has held or holds, and with his loyalty to the brotherhood of man."

Even looking back from that night in 1996, Freemasonry was much different when Bob was first the Master of Anacostia Lodge in 1969. That year was the Lodge's 100-year anniversary and according to the roles, Anacostia had 1200 members, and the Grand Lodge had about 25,000. Plans were made months in advance for Lodge meetings and social events. Communication with the members was simple — a monthly bulletin arrived in members' mailboxes like clockwork. On election night, the Lodge was filled with almost 100 men, and there were (friendly) competitive elections down the line. Ritual was learned, or men were dropped from line. The membership was so robust at Anacostia, they had a Lodge band. Of course, Bob played clarinet.

As Grand Master in 1997, MW Bro. Drechsler produced several highlights in a busy and active year. He convened the Grand Lodge on eight occasions that year, two of which were to consecrate new Lodges (Magnolia Lodge No. 53 and The Lodge of the Nine Muses No. 1776), and once to dedicate and consecrate the District of Columbia Obelisk in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, a monument erected in honor of DC servicemen who had been awarded the Medal of Honor. He also sponsored three major charities, including a national Masonic effort to raise funds for the renovation of the Washington Monument, and he saw the 30 Lodges in DC combine to contribute \$110,000 to various other charities in 1997. Under his direction, the Grand Lodge also developed a leadership training program for future Lodge Masters that still exists today.

## GREAT HONOR(S)

Bushidō was a system of teachings not unlike Freemasonry — both focus on improvement of the individual for the good of the whole. They also both teach that man should strive for a certain spiritual understanding of his surroundings, and that death is inevitable, unpredictable, and blind to class, religion, or race. Therefore, man must live everyday as if it may be his last — conscious of doing the little things that mark his striving for perfection.

Bob Drechsler is a perfect example of both philosophies. His zealous attention to detail and the quiet responsibility that he shoulders made him a better man, but it made those around him (including some small, but very important trees) better in the process. It was Most Worshipful Brother Drechsler's humility and dedication to hard work that made him a successful Grand Master and gave those around him such a positive and lasting impression of him.

It's unsurprising then that today there aren't many Masonic awards or titles that Bob doesn't have. He's in the DeMolay Legion of Honor, he has been awarded the Grand Cross Court of Honor in the Scottish Rite, and he is a recipient of the Grand Lodge of D.C.'s Distinguished Service Medal, just to name a few. True to himself, he's proud of these awards, if a little embarrassed by the attention.

And Bob continues on. He has seen nearly everything in his time — presidents and curators that came and went, and Grand Masters that did the same. He, however, has stayed relatively the same, a servant of whatever interests him. Today he volunteers at the museum of the Grand Lodge of DC. It's a part-time gig he squeezes in on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but like everything else in his life, he attacks the job with patience and focus, and there's no doubt he'll leave a positive and lasting impression on all those he encounters while he's there.



The Seal of Anacostia Lodge No. 21

# MASONIC CLUBS IN THE DISTRICT

By Carroll Collins, PM  
Secretary, Washington Daylight Lodge No. 14

Masonic clubs were phenomena of the first half of the twentieth century that have largely died out today. The first Masonic club to appear in the District of Columbia was the Trowel Club, organized in 1908 by Brothers working at the Geological Survey. As MWB Stewart W. Miner quoted from the 1916 *Proceedings* in a 2008 article for the *Voice of Freemasonry*, “It seems that a member of the fraternity, a clerk in that service, became ill, and several of his Masonic colleagues assembled informally to render him assistance. Out of this voluntary association, the Trowel Club, which ultimately served the whole of the Interior Department, evolved.”

As with the Trowel Club, these clubs were usually formed based on the Brothers’

occupation, branch of civil service, or trade, which helped Master Masons from many different Lodges of the same occupational background to get to know one another. Notable exceptions include the Italian American Club, obviously formed by Brethren of Italian lineage, and the George Washington University Club.

The Fellowship Club at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Trestleboard Club at the Government Printing Office, and the Compass Club at the city post office had been formed by December 17, 1913, when Grand Master Charles E. Baldwin “expressed his entire approval of Masonic clubs, as organized in the District” at the Grand Lodge Annual Communication on that date. In the year following MWB Baldwin’s remarks, the number of Masonic clubs in the District had more than doubled, and by 1916, there were “thirteen, with an aggregate

membership of almost three thousand.” An article in the *Evening Star* of March 5, 1916 reported that, “On the roster...are representatives of 120 Masonic lodges from forty states.”

There were also clubs formed for specific activities, such as the Fishing Club started by National Lodge No. 12, and the very successful Masonic Bowling Association that originated from the Duckpin Club of Columbia Lodge No. 3. In its first season, beginning in January 1915, ten teams had been enrolled, and by the 1916–1917 season, twenty-five of the thirty Lodges then extant had teams in the Association.

At some point prior to 1916, an Advisory Board for the Masonic clubs in the District had been formed to both coordinate the activities of these clubs and serve as a point of contact and conduit for information to and from the Grand Lodge.



Portrait of Boy in Bowling Alley in Masonic Temple, Bellows Falls, Vermont

A national organization, The League of Masonic Clubs, had been founded in 1905 in Syracuse, New York with a stated purpose of “the promotion of fraternal relations between the Masonic Clubs comprising it, and to facilitate the interchange of courtesies to visiting members.” At their first convention in 1906, the name was changed to The National League of Masonic Clubs, and in 1922, they boasted a membership of 600,000 members: apparently, membership in any affiliated club automatically made you a member of the national body.

Why clubs? I believe that this question is best answered by the report of Grand Master James W. Witten in the *1917 Proceedings* in reference to the transient Government employee population of the District, “The Masonic Clubs...have not only made large contributions to the pleasure and profit of our own members, but they have furnished Masonic association and an opportunity for useful work to the members of other jurisdictions living among us who, through their love for their mother lodges and their desire to maintain their identity at their former homes and present voting places in the states, have not felt inclined to dimitt and affiliate with our lodges here...”

The Masonic clubs of the District created a whirl of social activity, both individually and collectively, often held as fundraising events for charitable causes. They were especially attentive to the needs of our military personnel at home and “over there” during the First World War through formation of pre-USO canteens, and a network of housing facilities in the District for visiting servicemen.

Despite the good works, and engagement of sojourning Brethren, the club system was not held in universal esteem. Although the source is unclear, consider the statement published in the 1918 Proceedings, “...it would seem that Masonry in the District is infested with Masonic clubs,” and “why was not all of this (referring to relief and charitable work done by clubs in DC) done by the Lodges direct, and what was the necessity of a club?”

In the same Proceedings, the answer immediately followed the question, “The query is not a surprise. It is like the question of apathy and lack of attendance in the lodges. Maybe if the lodges were made more attractive there would be fewer clubs.”

By 1930, there were twenty-two Masonic clubs in the District, and a cursory scan of Grand Lodge Proceedings at five-year intervals, thereafter, indicate that

the club system continued to receive the approbation of the DC Grand Masters.

Today, the Masonic clubs in the District have mostly disappeared, with the High Twelve Club being the only one listed in the GLDC 2018 Masonic Directory.

The following list is taken primarily from *The Washington Herald* for May 8, 1921, and *The Builder* for August of the same year:

Anchor Club	U.S. Shipping Board
Alexandria Club	
Ashlar Club	War, Navy, State, & White House
Asor Club	Masonic Musicians
Circle Club	District Building Employees
Compass Club	Pace Institute (Ben Franklin Univ.)
Craftsman Club	Veterans Bureau
Cabletow Club	City Post Office Employees
Fellowship Club	Bureau of Engraving & Printing
Gavel Club	Business & Professional Businessmen
George Washington University Club	Alumni
Italian American Club	Heritage
Lambskin Club	Navy Yard Employees
Level Club	Census Office Employees (Commerce)
Railroad Square Club	Washington Terminal Employees
South Gate Club	DC Southern Railway Employees
Trestleboard Club	Government Printing Office
Triangle Club	Department of Agriculture
Trowel Club	Geological Survey (Interior)
National University Club	Law School
Ionic Club	Treasury Department
Petworth Masonic Club	
Doric Club	Washington Steel & Ordnance Co.
Philadelphia Club	Orient Commandery No.5
Five Points Club	Interstate Commerce Commission
Masonic Bowling Association	
Masonic Club Band	
National University Club	American University School of Law
Sojourners Club	Later, Sojourners Lodge No. 51
Temple Club	Post Office Master Masons

# PHOTO MONTAGE OF INSTALLATION

---



MWB Nicholas and his family after the installation.



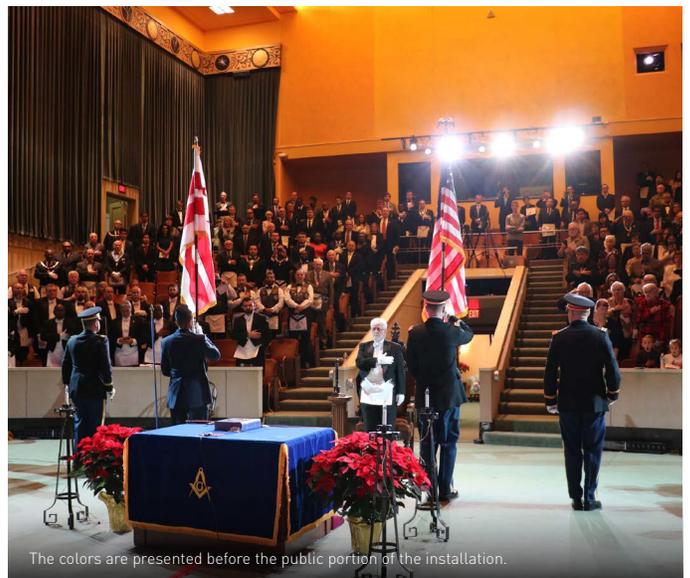
Grand Lodge about to be opened.



Appointed Grand Lodge Officers wait to be installed.



The smiles of newly installed appointed Grand Lodge Officers.



The colors are presented before the public portion of the installation.



WB Carpenter Arpa IV, Grand Marshal, escorts MWB Charbel Fahed to his seat in the East for the last time.



The Grand Master of the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise speaks in response to the introductions of visiting Grand Masters.



MWB Jesse Villarreal (foreground) at the podium, acting as the installing Grand Master.



WB Edward "Ted" Berry (right), stands in the West as he is awarded the Distinguished Service Award.



Appointed Grand Lodge Officers lined up, about to be installed.



First Lady Maryann Nicholas (left) sits in the front row with other members of the Nicholas family.



WB Elijah Mills (left) and Bro. Andrew Magie (right) share a moment of hilarity.



Installing Grand Marshal, MWB Len Proden, PGM (right) proclaims the new Grand Master.



The newly installed Grand Master of Masons in the District of Columbia—Michael D. Nicholas, Sr.



WB Mark Dreisonstok (left) is awarded the Valentine Reitzel Medal by MWB Fahed.



Newly appointed Grand Lodge Officers from the left, Fessou Lawson (Grand Almoner), Ande Tia (Assistant Grand Organist), and Youssouff Diallo (Aide to the Grand Master).



MWB Paul Gleason, Grand Master of Massachusetts, speaks from the podium on behalf of other visiting U.S. Grand Masters.



Officers of the Grand Lodge process into the auditorium.



The Grand Master-Elect (second from left) is presented in front of the installing Grand Master (right) by members of his Mother Lodge, Lafayette-Dupont No. 19 - John Maloney, PM (left) and J.D. Walker, current Master (third from left).

# ON THE QUESTION OF RELEVANCE

By *Worshipful Brother Quardricos*  
*Bernard Driskell*

*His remarks to his lodge, Colonial Lodge  
#1821 during his installation*

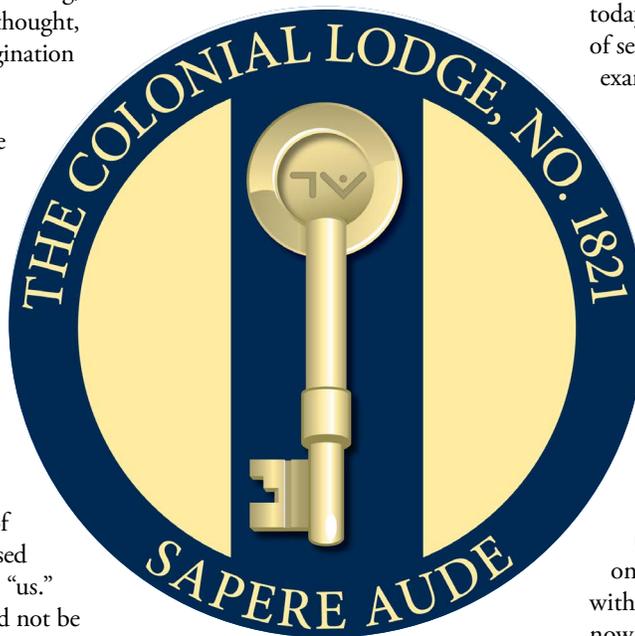
Often public discourse in the United States today is characterized by what Al Gore called “the assault on reason” and “the systematic decay of the public forum,” or what Jürgen Habermas has described as “the refeudalization of the public sphere.” To this war on reason and systematic decay of the public forum, I would add an overwhelming, media-driven assault on complex thought, in general, and sympathetic imagination more particularly.

Most disturbing, perhaps, is the current role that two of my passions and career interests (as most of you are aware) — religion and politics — so often play in public discourse in this country in the actual limiting of civic imagination, serving in public rhetoric to render the complexity of our society. Everything is either black or white; no one enters the complexity and particularity of a moral universal. The complexity of interwoven communities are tossed into simple equations of “us” and “us.” This is not our fraternity, so it should not be that we embrace these simple dichotomies.

At least that is the ideal. (Notwithstanding human frailty.) Indeed, what I will unabashedly call the public war on complex thought — of which the growing institutional neglect of the humanities can perhaps best be understood as a symptom — most often takes place under the rubric of “relevance.” To which masonry is not exempt. In a world that daily presents us with pressing issues of social justice and even planetary survival and economists who perpetually insist that resources are limited, the question of “relevance” is most often, in the sphere of public discourse, thinly defined solely in instrumental or functional terms of

immediacy. Can it cure cancer? Can it make money? What is the purpose?

Freemasonry is a science of morality filled with a peculiar allegory and symbols that inadvertently struggles and in some ways answers the question of relevance. Why do you think it has survived so long? Back in 2012, when I told my maternal grandmother that I was a freemason she was excited and further proud (grant it, she assumed I was Prince Hall Affiliated) because her father, my great-grandfather



and her brother, my great-uncle were masons. Moreover, she proceeds to share with me a story about how her brother, my great-uncle, Israel came home very late one night and he was covered in dirt — and her mother and the rest of the siblings were concerned. In addition, she recalled something her father said, do worry about Israel he was resurrected to be a new man.

Freemasonry to me is personal and thus relevant. As I am sure, we have all such examples.

But this approach to the question of relevance also includes a historical

component, offering various interpretations of the adage “those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it.” Freemasonry is not some ancient band of men tucked 10,000 miles away from our shores, or in a historical context where it can be safely ignored but it can be vital and growing part of the world if we moved beyond the chasms of our world.

Masons learn of the importance of the liberal arts and sciences, of which he is instructed they are seven; namely, Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy. Unfortunately, few Freemasons today take this instruction with any degree of seriousness and make no further effort to examine the nature of these arts.

To learn something about Hinduism is to learn something about your neighbor, your co-worker, your new son-in-law. This is both a valuable and urgently needed understanding of “relevance,” but I believe it to be simply the tip of the iceberg.

We all live, obviously, in the contemporary world, moving in our orbits and communities large and small, but how many among us have the perspective on the contemporary, on the here-and-now, that can only come with knowledge of something beyond the now and the near? Where do new ideas, new angles of interpretation, fresh insights into one’s world and circumstances come from? Many of the most productive, I would argue, emerge from careful consideration of the questions others have posed, how others in time and space have thought about what it means to be a human being living in diverse landscapes fraught with tension, disagreement, and uncertainty. They pondered the questions of relevance.

Few people in the world - move beyond there orbits. They do not dare to know or they dare to be wise. An African proverb teaches us — that He who has not traveled widely thinks that his mother is the best cook.



WB Driskell being Installed at the House of the Temple in December

Dare to know, Colonial Lodge's motto. In Latin, *Sapere Aude*. Colonial Lodge No.1821 is a self-identified university-affiliated lodge — university-affiliated, or are we an academic lodge, which some would assume research? The question of relevance first starts within ourselves defining who we are and what we are about before we can invite others in. This is the question I seek to explore this year - after all the lodge is only ten years old with a bright future ahead.

That we are daring to know, daring to become and daring to belong. This is part of *Bildung* or education. *Bildung* is seen as a way to become freer due

to higher self-reflection. The German explorer, Alexander Von Humboldt wrote concerning *Bildung* in 1793/1794:

“Education [*Bildung*], truth and virtue” must be disseminated to such an extent that the “concept of mankind” takes on a great and dignified form in each individual, however, this shall be achieved personally by each individual, who must absorb the great mass of material offered to him by the world around him and by his inner existence, using all the possibilities of his receptiveness; he must then reshape that material with all the energies of his own activity and appropriate it to himself

to create an interaction between his personality and nature in a most general, active and harmonious form.<sup>1</sup>

Be clear friends, Freemasonry is relevant. The Ethiopian proverb reminds — do not rush the night — the sun will always rise for its own sake.

However, it is up to us to ensure it remains relevant. Therefore, as we continue to ask and explore the question throughout my time in the East, I invite you to explore with me who are we are but more importantly who do we wish to become?

*Sapere Aude!*

<sup>1</sup> Sylke Meyerhuber, Helmut Reiser, and Matthias Schärer. Theme-Centered Interaction (TCI) in Higher Education: A Didactic Approach for Sustainable and Living Learning 1st ed. 2019 Edition.

# FREEMASONRY—UNITING MEN EVEN DURING APARTHEID

by WB Avron Jacobson, MSA  
Assistant Grand Master—The Grand Lodge  
of South Africa

*A central tenant of our Grand Lodge is the concept of “Freemasonry Universal” — an ideal that our Grand Lodge’s diversity makes us stronger. But what if acceptance and meeting on the level where illegal in our larger society? How would we act and meet?*

*This was, unfortunately, the exact situation our brethren in South Africa faced during the period in their country when the government instituted a brutal system of racial segregation known as “Apartheid.” But this story is a happy one, in ways, as you’ll see that Freemasonry characteristically found a way to rise above injustice and racism to welcome men of every race and creed to meet together in equality and to inspire us all to work to overcome our petty differences and become better men, together.*

*Our Grand Lodge’s delegation was pleased to meet the author of this article while at the Conference of Grand Masters of North America in Louisville. We present it to you here in hope that it serves as both a warning against draconian and ignorant laws meant to divide men, and an inspiration to Freemasons dedicated to the diametrically opposed ideal of “Universal Freemasonry.”—ed.*

It is a little-known fact that during Apartheid in South Africa there was only one organization permitted to fraternize or socialize with men of Colour. This organization is Freemasonry.

The process began with a meeting in 1970 at the Provincial Grand Lodge headquarters, Atlantic House, Cape Town. Senior Masonic officials of the Grand Lodge of South Africa (GLSA) and representatives of the English, Irish, and Scottish constitutions met with over forty brethren of colour who were members of



two Prince Hall Lodges (St. Patrick’s and Southern Cross), and were anxious to join the Grand Lodge of South Africa.

Prince Hall Masonry, which had existed in South Africa for over seventy years, was at the time unrecognized by ‘Regular’ Freemasonry, and its members felt isolated from their own Grand Lodge in Philadelphia, USA.

The conditions necessary for GLSA approval required the Prince Hall Lodges to fully surrender their Prince Hall charters and sever all connections with the Grand Lodge of Prince Hall in Philadelphia. The members would also need to be re-initiated, passed, and raised in accordance with the usages and customs of the GLSA. They would then be issued new aprons and given GLSA Diplomas, after which they would enjoy the same rights and privileges as all GLSA members.

These conditions were agreed upon unanimously, and a document containing the signatures of all the Prince Hall members was drawn up on 14 September 1973.

The next step was to present the case to the government of the time as full membership for Men of colour was impossible under Apartheid laws. The Group Areas Act had created separate residential areas to enforce physical separation between races, and the Liquor Act and Assembly Act effectively banned ‘whites’ from socializing or drinking with ‘non-whites’.

A very stringent document of conditions was produced in order to overcome the expected opposition from the government. The decision to go ahead with the proposal was made on 25 August 1973 at a Grand Committee meeting attended by all commissioned officers and officers of the Grand Lodge.

In 1977, after three meetings with a Parliamentary committee held over three years, the representatives of the GLSA met with the Committee of Internal Affairs. The committee, which included Adriaan Vlok, Dr. Piet Koornhof, Dr. Connie Mulder, Barend Du Plessis and Eschel Rhoodie, were in agreement but Prime Minister Vorster was dragging his feet.

A letter from the Secretary of Community Development was then received which stated that permit authorization was not required for men of colour to attend a closed function such as a normal Lodge meeting held on property owned by the Lodge.

These allowances were still not permissive enough for men of colour to be made 'fully-fledged' members.

Following this, a meeting was held with Prime Minister John Vorster and the head of intelligence, General Van Den Berg who urged the Prime Minister to "move it" and grant permission. General Van Den Berg did not mention to Prime Minister Vorster that he was a school time friend of the Grand Master of the time.

After four years of hard work by many Freemasons and with much help from General Van Den Berg's involvement, the final breakthrough in negotiations came through unexpected support received during the opening of a home for seniors from Prime Minister Vorster's wife, who was invited to be the Patron of the home. Many Freemasons were present at the occasion, and support was found from the Prime Minister's wife. After hearing their plea - which argued that it was "a worldwide opportunity to show that Freemasonry in South Africa was not racist" — she assured them that she would see what she could do, and shortly thereafter, a letter granting permission was received.

On 19 Nov 1977, in a series of workings going right through the day, the Prince Hall members were initiated, passed, and raised at the De Goede Hoop Temple in Cape Town. The first degree working was performed by the Provincial Grand Lodge officers, followed by the second degree performed by Lodge Kaapstad. They then stopped for lunch, after which they reassembled for the third degree, performed by Lodge De Goede Hoop.

After all the workings were complete, the new Grand Master, MWB S.R Gasson, consecrated the Lodges Perseverance and Phoenix, and a mixed banquet attended by over 400 people followed.

The news of Freemasonry accepting men of colour was reported in national newspapers including *The Rapport*, *Cape Times*, *Citizen* and *Cape Argus*.

At this time there were approximately 4,500 members of the GLSA and around 50,000 members of its sister constitutions. A circular was sent to all English Lodges by the District Grand Master of the English Constitution saying that it "recognizes brethren of colour of Lodge Perseverance and Lodge Phoenix," who could now visit any of the sister constitution Lodges.

Through the remaining years of Apartheid, it was possible to accept men of colour as full members with many of them achieved high office in the Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge.



vimeo

## VISIT THE GRAND LODGE VIMEO PAGE!



The screenshot shows a Vimeo video player on the website of the District of Columbia Grand Lodge. The video title is "2020, 0519 Grand Master Message 1" and it is from the "District of Columbia Grand Lodge". The video shows a man in a dark shirt speaking. The Vimeo interface includes a search bar, navigation links, and a play button.

You can find videos from our Grand Master, old videos converted from film and VHS, and video captured from past ceremonies like the 225th Anniversary of the Laying of the Capitol Cornerstone.

# TEMPLE OF ESHMOUN — MYSTERY SCHOOL AND BIBLICAL LINKS

*Bro. Forzley, Phoenix Lodge No. 1001*

During the June 2019 Grand Visitation of our lodges (Phoenix 1001 and Cadmus 1002) in Lebanon, Past Grand Master MWB Charbel T. Fahed, current Grand Master MWB Michael D. Nicholas, Sr., their delegation, and our brethren visited the Temple of Eshmoun in the historic seaside city of Saida (Sidon).

According to legend, Eshmoun was a young man from Beirut, who one day while hunting, came across the goddess Astarte who immediately fell in love with his looks. The goddess, who represented both fertility and war for the Phoenicians, chased him throughout the forests and fields trying to lure him with her beauty, harassing him physically to the point of despair. Eshmoun in his saddened state, self-mutilated his body leading to his untimely death. Astarte, sad and riddled with guilt, resurrected the dead, handsome, hunter, bringing him back as an immortal god. And not just any god — the Phoenician god of healing and fertility (for more information, see Walter Addison Jayne's, *Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*). His festivals, in ancient times, celebrated his death and rebirth with the seasons, and his story reminds us of similar stories from antiquity (Isis and Osiris, Adonis and Aphrodite, Dionysus / Bacchus, Attis, etc.). One only needs to dig deeper into the mysteries of the Third

Degree to see elements of these myths and their similarities with mystery schools.

The Temple of Eshmoun was built in the 5th century, B.C. and was considered sacred to the mystery school of Eshmoun, as well as being a place of worship for families praying to the god for providence over sick children. However, the location had already been sacred as far back as the

7th century, B.C. Although not clear, the mystery school located there most probably taught healing arts, as evidenced by the several ablution basins which are filled from the Asclepius river (modern Awali), and “Ydll” springs — thought to have curative properties. Archaeologists have found votive-offering traces all around the basin areas. Later, the grounds around the temple also became holy to the Romans



The Throne of the goddess Astarte in the East—the sphinxes on each side are circled.

*But King Solomon loved  
many foreign women...  
women of the Moabites,  
Ammonites, Edomites,  
Sidonians, and Hittites...*

—1 KINGS 11:1

and Christians, who added several buildings and places of worship.

The most notable artifact in the temple is the magnificent stone-carved “Throne of Astarte,” which lies in the East. The throne was the station to some sort of hierophant priest who stood before a stone altar (of which minor ruins remain). Even though the school was secretive in its ritual and

very little is known of it, most probably the throne’s dedication to Astarte has to do with her power to symbolically raise Eshmoun from the dead. The throne’s position in the East may have been placed as such to align with the morning rise of Venus (the planet Astarte represents) and the Sun. Venus lies within Earth’s orbit, and so it never appears far from the Sun, either rising in the East a bit before dawn, or setting in the West

just after dusk. Additionally, because of Astarte’s affiliation with Venus, one of her many symbols was the 5-pointed star within a circle. She was also known as the “deified morning and/or evening star” (K. van der Toorn et al, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*).

There is also an interesting link to King Solomon. Chapter 11 of 1 Kings in the Holy Bible mentions the following references to Sidon and Astarte (underlining by author):

- *1 Kings 11:1* - “But King Solomon loved many foreign women...women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites...”
- *1 Kings 11:5* - “For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians...”

What is interesting here is that “Ashtoreth” according to historians, is a north Semitic form of “Ishtar” and the Hellenized form of Astarte. So, it would seem that these passages are actually referring to the very same goddess and city our brethren recently visited.

*Directly to the left and right of the stone throne are two sphinxes (circled in red) and a removed altar known as the “Tribune of Eshmoun” which we saw in the National Museum a day before. The position of this grand seat in the East against the temple wall and the (removed) altar are similar to a lodge room indeed!*



*For Solomon went after  
Ashtoreth the goddess of  
the Sidonians...*

—1 KINGS 11:5

## THE VOICE OF FREEMASONRY

Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M. of DC  
5428 MacArthur Blvd., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20016-2524



NonProfit Org.  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 207  
Dulles, VA



Now in its 59th year, the Masonic Foundation of the District of Columbia is a 501(c) 3

registered nonprofit organization which operates as the charitable arm of the Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M. of the District of Columbia. The Foundation's continuing mission is to expand Masonic Philanthropy in the fields of charitable, educational, and scientific programs. **This year, our Grand Master, Most Worshipful Brother Michael D. Nicholas, Sr., has selected the Foundation as his preferred beneficiary of philanthropic donations by all DC Lodges and their individual members.**

In order to fulfill that mission and provide much-needed services and support in our community, **the Foundation relies entirely on the voluntary gifts and endowments from District of Columbia Masons, their families, and friends.**

Additionally, at this time, no portion of the dues of any Masonic body go towards the Foundation.

**Donations to the Foundation by Lodges and individual Brothers directly benefit the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area by being completely distributed to charitable organizations.** This empowers us as D.C. Freemasons to change lives through charity, securing the Masonic legacy of giving for generations to come.

**As you contemplate making a charitable gift this year, please consider making a tax-deductible gift to support the Masonic Foundation of the District of Columbia by visiting [DCMasonicFoundation.org](http://DCMasonicFoundation.org) and clicking the donate button at the bottom of the page, or by sending your check payable to The Masonic Foundation of DC to:**

5428 MacArthur Blvd. NW  
Washington, DC 20016

Your partnership and generous contribution will provide direct benefits to the community we serve.

---

**GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
MICHAEL D. NICHOLAS, SR., GRAND MASTER | JEFFREY D. RUSSELL, PGM, GRAND SECRETARY

**DCGRANDLODGE.ORG**