



Work & Lectures

A Metropolitan Atlanta Masonic Newsletter

david @ morelight . org

March 2009
Lodge Renewal

http://news.morelight.org



In This Issue

- 1- Area News & DCMA Report
- 2- Old Tyler Talks: *Advertising*
- 3- List of Special Events
- 4- Lodge Renewal: *Online Resources*
- 5- Lodge Renewal: *Gate City's Experience*
- 6- Lodge Assessment: *There's a hole in our bucket, dear Hiram, dear Hiram*

Metro Atlanta News

On Tuesday, 14 February, a great turnout greeted MWGM Jennings at Clarkston 492, where he presented several of his knives. Also on that night, Gate City 2 Raised two to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

On Tuesday, 24 February, Gate City 2's second installment of the Religion and Culture Series for 2009, focused on examining middle-ages Islamic culture through its poetry, was another hit with the crowd in attendance. Bro. J.D. Jordan of Roswell 165 gave an insightful presentation. Please visit <http://gatecity2.org> for information on future programs.

On Saturday, 21 February, a great many brethren from around Georgia and across the sea were in attendance at Solomon's Lodge No. 1 in Savannah to celebrate the 275th anniversary of the oldest continually operating English-constituted lodge in the western hemisphere. Some 500 are reported to have registered at the lodge that morning. The brethren opened in their own "time immemorial" version of the ritual and dramatized the Hiram Legend.

On Saturday, 28 February, the Knights of Mecca (a Shrine unit made up of Past Masters) conferred the Master Mason Degree on two candidates at Tucker 42, followed by a dramatization of the Hiram Legend. We had 36 brethren in attendance.

Directions & Maps

Brethren: directions, maps and meeting information for all DCMA member lodges can be found from the DCMA website at <http://dcma.morelight.org>

SCHEDULE CORRECTION:

The calendar printed on our cards shows no June meeting. In fact, we will be hosted by Grant Park 604 at their new location on Thursday, 11 June. Join us!

The DCMA... Determined to Cover Masonry in Atlanta! We'd like for your lodge to join us - ask one of us how.

Standard Disclaimer

This publication is created to inform the brethren. Any views or opinions that manage to sneak in are solely those of the editor, who does **NOT** speak for any organization whatsoever. Really.

DeKalb County Masonic Association Report

DCMA This Month

On Tuesday, 3 March, we'll be at North DeKalb 714, where we hope you'll join us for dinner at 6:30 and the meeting starting at 7:30. As with all DCMA events, your family, friends, and the general public are invited.



North DeKalb 714 meets at 2587 East Osborne Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30319-3174, and WBro. Fields advises that some streets have been recently designated as one-way.

DCMA Next Month

Tuesday, 21 April will find us at Masters 295, at 3038 LaVista Road, Decatur, GA 30033-1311.

DCMA Last Month

Our 2008 collections were split among the Georgia Masonic Children's Home (DDGM WBro. Robert Young accepting), the Knight Templar Eye Foundation (GHP DW Hendry accepting), and the Scottish Rite's RiteCare program (MWBro. Al Garner accepting). We had 86 in attendance, including an entourage from Gate City 2, which included the Grand Commander as well as two Master Masons who had only been raised two days earlier. For program notes on Gate City's recent Lodge Renewal efforts, please see page 5. Tucker 42 took the Gavel with 18, and Metro Daylight 743 took the banner with 14. Door prizes were won by WBros. Clarence Autry (444/743), and Charles Clarke (603/703/743), and Bros. Victor Marshall (2) and Kirk Hegwood (444).

DCMA This Year

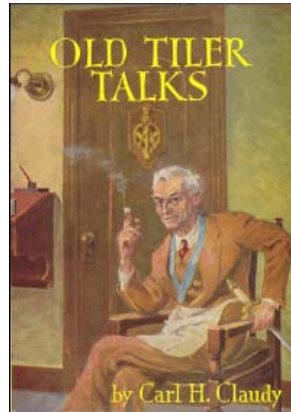
Pres: David Herman, Chamblee-Sardis 444 & Internet 9659, EC
david @ morelight . org, 404 421 5279
1st VP: James Tyroff, Philologia 178 & Metro Daylight 743
770 378 9531
2nd VP: Jim Cline, Clarkston 492
jclinejdcpa @ mindspring . com
Sec/Treas: Bill Eleazer, Glenwood Hills 703
billjoane256 @ aol . com or 770 922 5412

Where's YOUR News?

We'd be honored to support the community by publishing your news and events - all you have to do is let us know by emailing david @ morelight . org with all the information you'd like listed.

Old Tiler Talks

by Carl H. Claudy
PGM, District of Columbia
Mostly written in the 1920s



Advertising

The New Brother leaned against the wall near the Old Tiler and lighted a cigar. "We would do more good in the world if we advertised ourselves more," he said.

"Why?" asked the Old Tiler.

"So that those not members of the fraternity would know more about our work."

"Why should they?"

"The more people know about us, the more regard they have for us, the more men would want to be Masons, the larger we would grow, and so the more powerful we would be!" answered the New Brother.

"You would advertise us until all men became Masons?"

"Well - er - I don't know about all men; but certainly until most men applied."

"If all men were Masons at heart there would be no need for Masonry," answered the Old Tiler. "But not all who call themselves Master Masons are real Masons. What we need to do is advertise ourselves to our brethren."

"But we know all about Masonry," protested the New Brother; "the world at large does not."

"Oh, no, we don't know all about Masonry!" cried the Old Tiler. "Even the best-informed don't know all about Masonry. The best-informed electricians do not know all about electricity; the best-informed astronomers do not know all about astronomy; the best-informed geologists do not know all about geology. We all have much to learn."

"But electricity and astronomy and geology are sciences. Masonry is - is - well, Masonry was made by men, and so some men must know all about it."

"Can a man make something greater than himself?" countered the Old Tiler. "Our ears hear sounds- translate vibrations of air or other material to our brains-as noise or music. But the ear is limited; we do not hear all the sounds in nature; some animals and insects hear noises we cannot hear. We have eyes, yet these imperfect instruments turn into color and light but a tiny proportion of light waves. Scientific instruments recognize vibrations which physical senses take no account of-radio and X-ray for instance. Yet our whole conception of the universe is founded on what we see and

hear. Very likely the universe is entirely different from what we think. The ant's tiny world is a hill; he has no knowledge of the size of the county in which is his home, let alone the size or shape of the world. A dog's world is the city where he lives; not for him is the ocean or the continent or the world. The stars and the moon and the Sun are to him but shining points. Our world is bigger; we see a universe through a telescope, but we can but speculate as to its extent or what is beyond the narrow confines of our instruments.

"Masonry is like that. Our hearts understand a certain kind of love. Prate as we will about brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God, we yet compare the one to the love of two blood-brothers and the second to our feeling for our children. We measure both by the measuring rods we have.

"Real brotherhood and real Fatherhood of God may be grander, broader, deeper, wider than we know. Masonry contains the thought; Our brains have a limited comprehension of it. If this be so then we know little about Masonry, and what even the most learned of us think is probably far short of reality."

"All that may be so," answered the New Brother, "and it is a most interesting idea; but what has it to do with advertising to the profane?"

"Does a scientist make any progress by advertising his science?" countered the Old Tiler. "Will a geometrician discover a new principle by advertising for more students? Will the astronomer discover a new sun by running placards in the newspapers? Will a geologist discover the mystery of the earth's interior by admitting more members to the geological Society?"

"Masonry needs no advertising to the profane, but advertising to its own members. I use the word in your sense, but I do not mean publicity. Masons need to be taught to extend Masonry's influence over men's hearts and minds. We do not need more material to work with, but better work on the half-worked material we already have.

"Masonry is humble and secret; not for her the blare of trumpets and the scare head of publicity. To make it other than what it is would rob it of its character. To study, reflect, and labor in it is to be a scientist in Masonry, discovering constantly something new and better that it be more effective on those who embrace its gentle teachings and its mysterious power."

"Oh, all right!" smiled the New Brother. "I won't put it in the paper tomorrow. Old Tiler, where did you learn so much?"

"I didn't," smiled the Old Tiler. "I know very little. But that little I learned by keeping an open mind and heart - which was taught me by-

"By your teachers in school?"

"No, my son," answered the Old Tiler, gravely, "by Masonry."



List of Special Events - March & April 2009

The Grand Master's Calendar

09 Mar, Mon - Official Visitation
at Hapeville 590, Hapeville - 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

17 Mar, Tue - Official Visitation
at Kennesaw 33, Marietta - 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

28 Mar, Sat - 1st District Convention
at Alexander 385, Sardis. 10:00 meeting.

1 Apr, Wed - Official Visitation
at Fulton 216, Atlanta - 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

4 Apr, Sat - 2nd District Convention
Location? 9:00 meeting.

12 Apr, Sat - 12th District Convention
Locatoin? 9:00 meeting.

25 Apr, Sat - 3rd District Convention
Locatoin? 9:00 meeting.

Special Programs

24 Mar, Tue - Gate City Religion & Culture Series
Topic: *Schubert and Mendelssohn Recital*
at the Atlanta Masonic Temple, 6:30 meal. RSVP info will appear at <http://gatecity2.org/> to ensure ample food.

31 Mar, Tue - Macon Lodge of Research
Topic: *Wool Hat Boys presentation*
at the Scottish Rite Temple, Macon, 6:30 meal.

28 Apr, Tue - Gate City Religion & Culture Series
Topic: *Jewish History: Surviving Auschwitz - Murray Lynn*
at the Atlanta Masonic Temple, 6:30 meal. RSVP info will appear at <http://gatecity2.org/> to ensure ample food.

Degree Conferrals

Conferral schedules are TENTATIVE; confirm with host lodge.

03 Mar, Tue - Fellow Craft Conferral
at Lawrenceville 131, Lawrenceville. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

18 Mar - Wed - Entered Apprentice Conferral
at Fulton 216, Atlanta. 6:00 meal, 7:00 meeting.

19 Mar - Thu - Master Mason Conferral
at Roswell 165, Roswell. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**21 Mar - Sat - Master Mason Conferral & Dramatization
by the Knights of Mecca**
at Mt. Zion 316, Cumming. 8:00 meal, 9:00 meeting.

**18 Apr - Sat - Master Mason Conferral & Dramatization
by the Knights of Mecca**
at Fayetteville 711, Fayetteville. 8:00 meal, 9:00 meeting.

25/50 Year Awards, PM Nights

12 Mar, Thu - 25/50 Year Awards
at Lithonia 84, Lithonia. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

Associations, Clubs, Instruction

03 Mar - Tue - DeKalb County Masonic Association (open)
at North DeKalb 714, Brookhaven. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

04 Mar, Wed - DeKalb Masonic Memorial Club (open)
at Clarkston 492, Clarkston. 2:00 start.

14 Mar, Sat - Gwinnett County Masonic Association (open)
at Lawrenceville 131, Lawrenceville. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

01 Apr, Wed - DeKalb Masonic Memorial Club (open)
at Clarkston 492, Clarkston. 2:00 start.

11 Apr - Sat - Home Trustees & Workday for Dist. 2/3/6/7
at the Children's Home, Macon.
1:00 pm for Trustee meeting, 8:00 am for Workday

21 Apr - Tue - DeKalb County Masonic Association (open)
at Masters 295, Decatur. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

14 Apr, Tue - Gwinnett County Masonic Association (open)
at Dacula 433, Dacula. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

Fundraisers

07 Mar, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser
at Stone Mountain 449, Stone Mountain. 8-11 am.

07 & 14 Mar, Sat - Turkey Shoot
at Pace 558, Covington. Co-sponsored by the Travelling Men.
Contact either for more information.

17 Mar, Tue - Dinner Fundraiser
at Casa Nuova Italian Restaurant, Alpharetta, 7:00 pm.
proceeds to benefit the Children's Charity Fund, which supports children's health and support systems \$50.00 per.
Call (770) 475-9100 for reservations or more information.

21 Mar, Sat - Dinner Fundraiser
at Lawrenceville 131, Lawrenceville. 6-9 pm.

28 Mar, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser
at Chamblee-Sardis 444, Chamblee. 7-11 am.

04 Apr, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser
at Stone Mountain 449, Stone Mountain. 8-11 am.

11 Apr, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser
at Lakewood 443, Lovejoy. 8-11 am.

GACHIP Programs

14 Mar, Sat - Gate City 2, Sponsors
at Fernbank Science Center, Atlanta. 8:00 - 5:00.

14-15 Mar, Sat-Sun - Piedmont 447, Sponsors
at Cyber Olympics, Roswell, 11:00 - 5:00.

21 Mar, Tue - Kennesaw 33, Sponsors
at Touch-a-Truck, Kennesaw. 10:00 - 2:00.

18 Apr, Sat - Buford 292, Sponsors
at Earth Day, Gwinnett Env. & Heritage Ctr. 9:00 - 5:00.

25 Apr, Sat - What Lodge Sponsors?
at Touch-a-Truck, Alpharetta 10:00 - 2:00.



Lodge Renewal: Online Resources

Brethren, there are tremendous resources available online to help you and your lodge. I will attempt to highlight the very best of them for you here, but I encourage you to explore each of these websites in their entirety, because Freemasonry in general - and your personal Masonic experience in particular - deserve nothing less.

1. After a very slow start, the **Masonic Renewal Committee** of the Conference of Grand Masters of North America has finally placed some very helpful material on their website, <http://masonicrenewal.org>. They offer papers and presentations on topics including Lodge Programs, Membership, Mentoring, Leadership, Community, Retention and Communication, assembled from various jurisdictions across North America.
2. The **Brother to Brother** program of the Grand Lodge of (Canada in) Ontario is an enormous program designed to cover various potential shortcomings in the Masonic experience. Each chapter can be downloaded from their website at http://www.grandlodge.on.ca/B2B/B2B_2.htm. I will direct your attention to three of the chapters: Chapter 4 gives great advice on managing the new Brother from the time he becomes a candidate until his first year as a Master Mason is over; Chapter 5 is a reference for the present officers and Past Masters in actually running the lodge; and Chapter 6 deals with getting involved with absent and suspended members.
3. As impressive as the above resources may be, I have to say that the **Lodge Renewal Reading List** of the Toronto Society for Masonic Research (<http://tsmr.org/renewal.php>) has an eye-opening collection of “must read” links. I will summarize two of them:

Whither Are We Traveling? is a 41 page paper by Dwight L. Smith, PGM of Indiana, questioning (in 1964) where the fraternity was headed, and listing potential pitfalls:

I shall propose no bright new ideas - not one. All I am going to advocate is that Freemasonry remain Freemasonry; and if we have strayed from the traditional path, we had better be moving back to the main line while there is yet time to restore the prestige and respect, the loyalty and devotion that once was ours.

The mere fact that men do not comprehend its purpose does not mean that Freemasonry has no purpose, nor that its purpose is outmoded - it only means that the stones are not being well hewn and squared in the quarries where they are raised. Freemasonry has not been tried in the balance and found wanting: it has been found difficult and not tried.

Laudable Pursuit: A 21st Century Response to Dwight Smith is a 35 page response to MWBro. Smith, written some 40 years later by Masons who are known collectively as the “Knights of the North”:

This new generation of members wants to associate with something ancient, something mythical, something legendary; with a group that has been the fraternity of the greatest of men for three centuries; with a fraternity that is worldwide in its scope, and universal in its welcoming of all faiths and all races; with a local lodge that helps the family next door and the school down the street; with a group that once was at the forefront of issues that shaped this country and—arguably—was the crucible that gave birth to the revolution because they were men of action and social conscience; with a fraternity that claims as its members the most imaginative minds and the most successful of men.

That's what they read about on the internet and in books and see in movies and even comics. That's the image they see and what they are looking for when they knock on our doors. But what do we give them when they enter? Stop for a minute and think about the image your Lodge projects. Think about what they expect versus what they find. Given that disparity, how long do we suspect they will stay?

Brother, the course and actions of one lodge aren't necessarily right for another. Wherever you and your lodge are heading, I hope that you're going there as the result of a well thought out plan, implemented by the Worshipful Master and championed by the brethren of the lodge. Ignorance and apathy have no place in a Masonic Temple. Take the Craft where you will, but please, ***please*** take it there on purpose, with purpose.



Gate City Lodge's Renewal Initiatives - and Their Results

By WBro. Beaux Pettys, PM, Gate City 2

The purpose of this program is to share the processes and programs which took us at Gate City from where we were to where we wanted to be. Every lodge has its own momentum, its own fit in the community, its own flavor and style. The resurgence of Gate City II started with Mike Bjelajac and myself as the main proponents. We worked diligently in every aspect of improvement. We started by considering what we ourselves would like to see. We then moved to what would attract others to our lodge, and ultimately how to keep them. Through difficulties and the naturally occurring personnel shifts of today's mobile society, the lodge ebbed and flowed for a few years, but still managed to gain and keep several key members: Doug Hrabe, Chris Wilson, Donald Hall, Nick Hayes, Bill Wallace and Edwin Demars. We established elements of the points below, but could only ever really find time to implement the first three (and we didn't have them formally categorized at the time).

We started to more clearly define what was needed around September of 2007, but still could not manage to fully implement them all. Everyone has day jobs, and several of us had more than one role in the lodge to fulfill - we were stretched a bit thin. I always knew that an active Craftsmen's Club of Past Masters was the key. I ended my two years as Master in December of 2007. After resolving some difficult situations - which ultimately made us closer - I knew it was time to seal the deal and finish what we started. Still, we didn't have these six points formally identified - just the clear idea that they were necessary. With the implementation of each point, the change was palpable. By the time our annual retreat came around in December of 2008, everyone knew we were on to something. We closed the deal with the introduction of the Religion and Culture Series, as well as an active blog and website, which showcase the ambience of the lodge. These six points have been identified in hindsight, after I was asked to speak on the subject at the February DCMA meeting.

We are an intown lodge, operating in one of the largest and racially diverse cities in the United States. You may not agree with our approach or make up; you may not like our formality; you may think we have a Lodge Ego the size of our great city - and that's okay. These points are universal, and could help your lodge as they did ours.

1. Appearance of the Brethren. Gate City already had the custom of having our officers wear tuxedos, and it was a small matter to reinforce this, and to ask the rest of the brethren to wear a coat and tie when at all possible; for many, this was already their normal lodge attire.

2. Ritual Proficiency and Execution. We decided that it wasn't enough to be "merely proficient" - we wanted to do the work with a crisp, military precision, having everyone move, face, or be still as a team. We decided to step up to this level of execution for the officers ourselves and for our sideline members - but most especially for our candidates, who come to us seeking something special, outside of and above their workaday experiences; we wanted our love of the ritual to shine through.

3. Appearance of the Lodge. Two weeks after I was elected Worshipful Master, I pulled the shag carpeting out of the South Lodge Room and installed a granite and marble tessellated floor. We turned off the fluorescent lights, turned down the incandescent lights, and began using actual candles to represent the Three Lesser Lights. We feel that this sets the tone nicely for a beautiful Masonic evening. A quick visit to <http://gatecity2.org> will give you a feel for the present appearance - and, in fact, we worked out a brand new website, because that's all a great many people will ever see of our lodge, and we wanted to put our best foot forward.

4. Fellowship. One of the most important draws for a new brother is fellowship. Bonds of friendship are forged during unstructured time. You don't get to know the fellow across from you while you are sitting in lodge; it is outside of the lodge meetings where you truly connect; it is at the planning sessions and at refreshment that men become brethren in the full realization of that bond. Gate City goes that all one further by having various social gatherings throughout the year and an annual weekend retreat, where we get to know each other between cycles of ritual practice, event planning, catechism work and pitching in to prepare and clean up the meals.

5. Education. People come into Freemasonry with a variety of expectations. Some are seeking enlightenment, or at least help along that path; most expect regular lessons on symbolism, morality, personal development and the meaning of life. They don't join for a place to have hot dogs and coffee (although that may be a welcome side effect). They come to find something that has been missing, something that is worth their time away from their families, the television, the internet and the myriad of other things that one could be doing during a lodge meeting. This year we actually combined Education, Outreach and Publicity, and bundled them up into our Religion & Culture series. With an aggressive kick off of eight programs, we are opening each one to members, families, friends, prospective members, brethren from other lodges and the public in general. These programs cover a variety of topics, including an Introduction to Hinduism and the Kashi Atlanta Ashram (65 guests attended); an Ancient Islamic Poetry reading and explanation, a recital of Hayden, Mozart and Mendelssohn (all Masons); remembrances of a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz and Russian purges; a Deacon will speak on the Catholic Church's historical and present position on Freemasonry; an overview of Shamanic practices; and more to be booked.

6. Programs. The Atlanta Masonic Temple does not have any kitchen facility, so we had to think outside of the box if we wanted to contribute to charities in our community - no pancake breakfast or fish fry events. We have raised and donated money through bowling for Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation, we have hosted GACHIP events, and we have raised money for the families of fallen police officers, but this year we will be branching out further, hosting a Jazz show in Decatur, with the proceeds going to the Doctors Without Borders charity. Additionally, our Senior Warden, Bill Wallace, will be climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa as a fundraiser for Doctors without Borders, and he will unfurl a Masonic flag at the summit. Other programs include special implementation of the above points as well as presentations and charitable endeavors.

We're not saying that the direction that Gate City took is right for every lodge; but every lodge deserves to have dedicated brethren take a good hard look at where they are today, where they'll be tomorrow if they don't change, and what (*if anything*) they want to do about that.



There's a hole in our bucket, dear Hiram, dear Hiram

By WBro. Stephen Dafoe, excerpted from *The Journal of The Masonic Society*

The beginning of this editorial analyses data from <http://msana.com/msastats.asp> depicting membership trends since 1924. What follows is the balance of the editorial, focusing on more recent data:

What the numbers don't tell us!

In 2005 I was asked to deliver the keynote address to the Western Canada Conference - an annual gathering of the Grand lines of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Part of my presentation sought to dispel [the] myth that the Grim Reaper was using his scythe to cut a swath through the fraternity. Whereas the MSANA numbers only give us the bottom line, I was able to look at the big picture closer to home by tracking specifics in our membership statistics over an eight-year period. What I discovered was that, like the rest of North America, Alberta had a sizeable hole in our Masonic bucket; 1,777 of our Brethren had affiliated with the Grand Lodge above, leaving us with a net loss of 1,512 members between 1996 and 2003. But this was not where our problem was because the numbers showed that in that same period of time, 3,118 men had joined, affiliated or renewed their membership in one of our lodges.

In an ideal world, the difference between deaths and new members should have seen Alberta experience a 14 per cent growth in that time, but instead, we were dwindling, just like everywhere else. The question was why? Where was the hole in our Masonic bucket that was causing the decline? It wasn't through deaths; we were clearly finding the men to replace ourselves. The answer was through demits and suspensions for non payment of dues (SNPD); a combined loss of 2,863 over the eight years. When added to the deaths, we had lost a total of 4,640 men, while gaining a respectable 3,118. The hole in our Masonic bucket had been found and, as I've learned, it is not an isolated situation.

This past November I was keynote speaker at the Grand Lodge of Manitoba's Masonic workshop and presented a similar address and findings, chronicling their past six years of data. Like Alberta, Manitoba has a hole in its Masonic bucket, caused by demits and suspensions outpacing new members. Between 2002 and 2007 Manitoba saw 856 men join, affiliate or reinstate their memberships. During that same time, 753 Manitoba masons have died; again leaving a positive number between membership losses and gains. Like Alberta, their hole is caused by the combinations of demits and SNPDs. In the past six years the province has seen 1,355 men leave the Masonic fraternity.

But the Craft lodge in Canada is not alone in finding it has a bucket with the same hole. Membership statistics from the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar show that between 2004 and the end of September 2008, 17,470 American Freemasons have become Templars, while 9,576 have taken a demit and another 21,706 have been suspended for non payment of dues. Add to this the 22,546 Templars who have gone on to join their creator, and you have 36,358 fewer Knights Templar marching about. But perhaps marching about is precisely the problem. Perhaps the men who are joining today are joining to parade about like sword-wielding Templars of old and disappointed to find only old Templars parading about doing sword drill. It is a question only the Grand Encampment and those who are left in her commanderies can resolve, but like the Craft Lodges, its bucket is leaking primarily from the same rusted out hole.

Towards a solution

... I wrote an editorial titled *The Restaurant at the End of the Masonic Universe*. Without republishing the editorial here, it told the story of a restaurant that does not live up to its advertizing slogan, "We make good food better," an obvious play on our own slogan "We take good men and make them better." The editorial, which has received equal doses of praise and criticism, sought to explain in a light manner the malaise affecting Freemasonry today and the true cause for the hole in our bucket.

Every Mason has heard the expression "but we've always done it that way before." The fact that it is used as the butt of Masonic jokes serves as proof positive of its longevity and power in maintaining a status quo. But, as we have seen by what the MSANA numbers don't show us, the status quo is draining our buckets. As the allegory of my restaurant editorial showed, the reason things suck in many lodges is because the men who show up month after month like things that suck. They do so because they enjoy the bland food; not the shoe-leather roast beef and off color green beans, but the Masonic meal that is largely comprised of recitation of minutes, tedious debates over how funds are dispersed and arguments over when and how to salute the Worshipful Master. Clearly these are not the things that appeal to the men who are leaving our ranks. If they were, they'd be with us still. But instead of spending our energies trying to retain them, we devote our efforts to finding their replacements.

For as long as I have been a Freemason, we have been trying to fill a bucket that has a sizeable hole in it. Like Henry in the famed children's song, we have whined through the infinite loop of reasons why we can't fix the bucket and like Jack in the nursery rhyme, we have rolled down the hill, our empty bucket tumbling behind us. Like children on a bus trip we have done our rendition of *99 Bottles of Beer* by repeating the same patterns ad nauseam, as one by one our members - like the bottles of beer on the wall - vanish.

Unfortunately, we are not doing a good enough job identifying what it is that the men who are joining are looking for, which is - in almost all cases - that which they cannot get any place else - FREEMASONRY! They are looking to be educated in the Masonic Craft, in the art of being a gentleman in a world that has largely forgotten what one was, and in how they can be part of - to quote my jurisdictions ritual - "the society of men who prioritize honour and virtue above the external advantages of rank and fortune." In short, they want to be taught the things about themselves and the world in which they live that only Freemasonry can teach them. If we cannot teach them because we do not know those things ourselves, then we must learn alongside them. Then, and only then, can the hole in our Masonic bucket be truly repaired and we can return to that growth that once allowed us to select men who would most benefit from Freemasonry's teaching and most benefit Freemasonry by their character and their conduct.

It will not be an easy task fixing the half-century old hole in our Masonic bucket; but it will not be possible at all until we accept that a failure to do so is the cause of our decline and the harbinger of our demise.

For more information about *The Masonic Society*, visit <http://themasonicsociety.com>

