



Work Lectures

Masonic News for Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia
Spring 2010
Improvement



Three Metro Atlanta Lodges win Mark Twain Masonic Awareness Award!

Congratulations to Gate City 2, Roswell 165, and Nelms 323

Established "to recognize lodges that have demonstrated exemplary work in constructing a positive Masonic identity within the lodge and for the local community," the Mark Twain Masonic Awareness Award has been presented to fewer than 100 lodges nationally in the four years since its inception. There are over 13,000 Masonic Lodges in the United States.

The award is presented annually to those lodges that demonstrate exceptional commitment to Freemasonry's philosophy of self-improvement and enlightenment, and have successfully addressed the challenges of improving Masonic Awareness within both the lodge and the community - and whose brothers have done so with exemplary skill, creativity, and resourcefulness.

Measurement criteria include considering what the lodge did to heighten Masonic awareness in the community by communicating traditional Masonic values, as well as what the lodge did to provide camaraderie, build enthusiasm among members, and create an environment of mutual respect.

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DeKalb County Masonic Association News

The DCMA visits Grant Park 604 on Thursday, 11 June, and Clarkston 492 on Tuesday, 20 April.

Gwinnett County Masonic Association News

Please contact me if you have current details; 2008 is the latest information that I can find online.



Gate City Lodge No. 2 - 2009 programs included the very well attended Religion and Culture series of lectures by guest speakers, open to the public, as well as Masonic visits to the DeKalb County Masonic Association, to the 275th Anniversary of Freemasonry in the Americas (hosted by Solomon's Lodge No. 1), the Annual Lodge Retreat (held at Big Canoe), GACHIP sessions at Fernbank Science Center and the Highland Games at Stone Mountain, and two classes of candidates.

Roswell Lodge No. 165 - 2009 programs included a year full of ritual work, guest speakers, Widow recognition and Masonic Education and Leadership Development training. See their MELD schedule for 2010 on page 6.

Nelms Lodge No. 323 - 2009 programs are not easy to determine from their website, but I'm sure they met the same high standards set by their fellow recipient lodges.

Hearty congratulations on a job well done, brethren - very well done indeed!

Old Tiler Talks: *Poor Fish*

By Carl H. Claudy, PGM, District of Columbia - mostly written in the 1920s

If I didn't love the old lodge so much I'd dimit and go to a live one!"

The New Brother spoke disgustedly to the Old Tiler. He laid down his sword, hitched in his chair and snorted. "S'matter with the old lodge now?" he asked belligerently.

"Oh, same old thing. Same old gang. No possible chance of doing anything different than we ever did. No pep. No costumes. No new expenditure for anything. We have died on the vine and don't know it!"

"Someone step on a resolution you offered?"

"Didn't offer any. Knew better. No use asking that bunch to do anything."

"Listen, brother, while I give you some advice. Look at an aquarium and consider the fishes."

"Huh?"

"Consider the fishes - the poor fishes. I asked the master of the aquarium what kept a bass in a glass pot full of water from eating up his small minnow companions. He told me he had trained the bass not to eat minnows. I asked him how he could do that. He said he put a plate glass partition in the aquarium, with the minnows on one side and the bass on the other. The bass made a nose dive after a mouthful of minnows and got a noseful of invisible plate glass.

That made him pause for a moment but he soon returned. For three days that determined bass tried to dive through the glass he couldn't see. After the third day his nose was so sore he gave up. Decided, probably, that the minnows were ghost minnows and couldn't be eaten! He has lived with them a year since and never tried to eat one, even when it rubs against his nose.

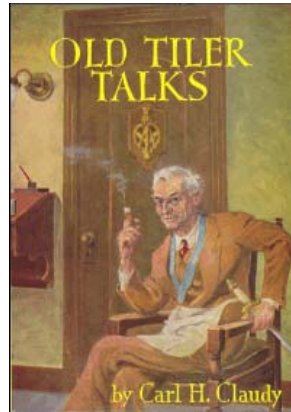
"Now, brother, you consider the poor fish. He doesn't try anything because once he did and got a sore nose. You think the old lodge is dead because it won't spend money for costumes or stage an entertainment or buy a new temple or something. You are convinced it has withered on the vine, because it hasn't done anything progressive. Every brother in it talks the same way. Everyone wants to do something, but a few years ago a crowd of standpatters put a plate glass between the membership and any minnows of progress. The plate glass is long gone and the standpatters are a ring no more. But you and all the rest are afraid to offer constructive programs because you think the plate glass is still there.

Between you and the bass, there's little difference in wealth."

"Wealth? I don't get you.

"I said wealth. You are both poor fish.

"That's handing it out pretty straight," commented the New Brother. "Now tell me, Old Tiler, why you think this old lodge doesn't spend money for anything except



necessities and charity? You think it is a good lodge, a flourishing lodge, an old lodge!"

"Got any loose change in your pocket?" asked the Old Tiler.

"Sure, a handful," said the New Brother, pulling it out.

"Hold a dime in front of one eye and close the other. What do you see?"

commanded the Old Tiler.

"Why, I sec a dime, of course!" was the surprised answer.

"Exactly. You see a dime. You don't see the \$1.87 on the chair. A dime is close so that you can't see \$1 a foot away. That's the idea of brethren who won't spend lodge money for anything they don't have to. They see the treasury full to bursting and investments piling up, then they try to look through a dime and are so scared to spend a dollar they don't dare read the treasurer's report aloud for fear someone will steal it!

"It was a fine lodge; now it is running on its reputation. It used to spend money wisely. Everything we needed we had. We had jamborees and smokers and entertainments; we had picnics and outings; we had educational lectures and a library; instructive talks were given new brethren and candidates. We spent what we took in and made better Masons by so doing. Gradually we began to look at the thin dimes so hard we couldn't see the success, progress, reputation, we had bought with dollars. So we stopped spending. Now we have money and a reputation of having died on the vine. What shall it profit a lodge if it lay up large numbers of dollars in the treasury, and lose its hold on its members? Where is the profit of penuriousness and lack of progress, even if we have money? What good is money unless you spend it? A million dollars at the North Pole isn't as valuable as one fur coat. All the money in the world on a desert island wouldn't buy one newspaper. You must spend money to get the good of it. You must spend money to make money. And you must spend money to keep your lodge alive and make your members better members and your Masons happy Masons. "

"I never thought of it that way, Brother.

"I think I'll start a public aquarium," continued the Old Tiler.

"What for?" the New Brother was unwise enough to ask.

"For the poor fish, of course," snapped the Old Tiler. "I've got one here to start with."

"Come on in that lodge room with me," commanded the New Brother firmly. "No Old Tiler can call me a poor fish and get away with it!"

"What are you going to do?" asked the Old Tiler.

"Offer a resolution to spend \$1,000 in the next six months in educational work among our members, and you are going to second it."

There goes the start of a perfectly good aquarium," sighed the Old Tiler.



Value Meal Masonry

WBro. Cliff Porter, Colorado

Almost eerie shadows bounced and danced their solemn dance to the candlelight casting its shadows and souls upon the walls of the lodge, the temple. The men moved in silence in a circumambulation around their altar. Dress in tailcoats, their hands gloved, the aprons of the finest lambskin.

The Brothers took their seats and the lodge was called to order, the ritual perfect and well practiced. The booming voice of the Worshipful Master and wraps of the gavel calling something forward from deep within everyone that the work at hand was important.

Classical music wafted through the air and hung heavy on the deeper notes, the vibration touching the very souls of the men who sat through it. The business of the night was a discussion of philosophy and it went well.

At the conclusion of lodge, the men retired to the dining room for a tradition Agape celebration with toast, fine food, and fine wine.

The taste of the foods blossomed well with the wine selected for that dinner and it was with bitter sweetness that the Brethren pulled their chairs from the table for the final toast of the evening.

Cigars and Scotch followed as the men discussed their views on religion, politics, and the fraternity well into the night.

The next morning the men headed off to work. Tradesmen of all types, policemen, military, Brothers from all walks of life headed out from their suburban homes to their cubicles, cop cars, and offices to earn a living.

I have the great fortune to belong the lodge described above and so does my Brother, friend, and neighbor.

We often sit together on my porch solving the world's problems both with a glass of bourbon and I with a cigar. It was during one of these sessions my friend, who is a Fellow Craft, spoke his prophetic words of wisdom about lodge, specifically his lodge experience and one of the reasons Masonry is important to him and should be treated as such.

"You know," he began with a tone in his voice echoing his contemplation, "my whole life is average, I live in an average home, I have an average job, and I shop at superstores for my average food, my average clothes, and my average television. I love that Masonry is not average. I love that once a month I get treat something special and that I feel special because of it. I'm glad we don't experience Wal-Mart Masonry. I don't want quicker, easier, or cheaper. I don't need my Masonry in bulk with low quality materials. I don't want Wal-Mart Masonry that one day of my month."

He is new to Masonry and his lodge is "special" because we make it so. He does not come from the Masonic experiences most of had when we formed our lodge. He was initiated into our lodge and has "grown up" there. Nonetheless, he hit on something quite profound. How much of Masonry has suffered as we moved to Wal-Mart Masonry.

As tracing boards that were profoundly beautiful and steeped in artistic imagery moved to PowerPoint presentations, as quality wrought ritual moved to stuttered lines from a man moved into the progressive line to quickly, as Festive Boards moved to paper plates and plastic forks, as dressing for lodge meant no holes in your jeans—what disservice have we done to ourselves and to

our Craft as we turned to the convenience and cost of Wal-Mart Masonry.

When there is little value placed in the trappings of the lodge, when there is little value placed on the experience itself, when there is more emphasis placed on completing things quickly and with little cost, how can we believe that men will find value in the thing itself, in the finished product?

We are often men of average means, of average lives. I am content to buy my food at the at largest store for the cheapest price. I am content to buy my clothes from the sales rack, but should I be content with generic low-cost Masonry?

If we are to believe our own brochures and websites we make good men better. How do we do this by treating everything like it should be quicker, cheaper, and in bulk? Do I really want my Masonry from the superstore with little thought given to its intrinsic and philosophical values? Do I want my morality in a low cost buy six and the seventh one is free?

If we practice our own philosophies then kneeling at the altar of Masonry should be more than a slight distraction before we head downstairs for a ham sandwich with generic mayonnaise and fruit punch because soda is cost prohibitive.

If we practice our own philosophies then changing a man's life and actually improving him should be thought of as an experience worthy wearing socks that match and having on something more profound than a pair of blue jeans.

We are supposed to invoke the blessing of Deity before our undertakings and yet we approach our Creator with hurried expressions and a disdain as we bicker about bills and provide little or no education. The Craft turned into a superstore of membership at one time. We worshipped at the altar of large numbers so that we could keep our dues artificially low and provide some bang for the buck. Then, as the membership dwindled, the dollars stayed low, and the experience was hacked to bare minimum so that we didn't "waste" our member's time. Waste their time—with Masonry....

The Fraternity can no longer afford Wal-Mart Masonry. To save Masonry we must change our thinking from quantity to quality. It is not about how many men are Masons, but how many men should be Masons. Masonry can no longer afford the quick sale, the PDF petition available for all who might want one.

The Fraternity must learn to value itself, so that others might see value within it. The tough thing about making Masonry valuable is that it takes effort. Meetings can't be thrown to together, meals can't be nuked, and Brothers can't be raised in an afternoon with no memory work.

We love to hail Freemasonry as the home of our Founding Fathers...well, then work to make it the Masonry they would have revered and let's leave our value meal days behind us.

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<http://TheMasonicSociety.com>



Fighting Lodge Apathy

WBro. Tim Bryce, Florida

Not too long ago I attended a roundtable discussion of local Lodge officers from my district to discuss the state of our Lodges and what, if anything, can be done to improve our current situation. Inevitably, the talks primarily focused on declining membership and rising operating costs of the Lodge. One question which caught my attention though was from a young Junior Warden who complained attendance at meetings was substantially down indicating apathy in the Craft. He claimed this was their Number One problem right now and was at a loss as to what was causing it. I looked at him incredulously and said, "You're kidding, right?"

You really don't know why they are not attending?"

He said no; the officers of his Lodge were baffled by what was going on.

I told him it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out. There are primarily three reasons for apathy in the Lodge:

1. Lodge activities have become boringly repetitive; the same old things are said over and over again, the same old pasta or rubber chicken is served, and nothing of substance is happening. Basically, the Lodge has fallen into a rut and is having trouble getting out of it. To do so, it is necessary to somehow stimulate the Craft. This can be done many different ways; perhaps a guest speaker or special topic, perhaps a slight change in the format (hold refreshment before the meeting as opposed to afterwards or vice versa), serve meals on china as opposed to paper plates, perhaps a different kind of meal altogether (some day I'll have to tell you about my Deep Fried Turkey dinner or "Spamfest"), perhaps something as simple as a slight modification in dress, etc.

Small changes add up over time and do not go unnoticed by the Craft. They should be viewed as positive, beneficial, and upbeat.

2. Attending Lodge has become very political in nature. Bickering and back biting is not conducive for attendance. Members experience enough of this during the day at work or in their personal lives, they don't want to listen to it in Lodge. I know too many Masons who stay away from Lodge for this reason alone.

They want harmony in the Lodge, not contention; camaraderie, not competition.

Petty political power struggles are costing Lodges a lot of sideliners.

3. It is perceived that attending Lodge does not add value to a person's life.

Brothers will stop coming the moment they believe they are not getting anything out of attending Lodge. If they are not learning anything or enjoying some camaraderie, they will stop coming. Further, if they believe the Lodge is not accomplishing anything of merit, such as supporting a local charity or tackling some kind of project, that it is stagnant, they will lose interest quickly. If they believe the Lodge is apathetic, they will act as such in return. It is contagious.

These three reasons do not necessarily pertain to Brothers who live far away from Lodge or who cannot attend due to health reasons. But then again, maybe they do. For example, for those Brothers who live far away, has the Lodge made an attempt to find out what the Brothers are doing and reported it in Lodge (or perhaps in a Trestleboard newsletter)? The names of Brothers may become obscure over time but are rarely forgotten. Further, they like to be remembered, be it a birthday or some important anniversary. As to Brothers who have difficulty attending Lodge due to health reasons, has there been an attempt to contact the Brother and provide some assistance for attending Lodge? If a Brother is remembered by a Lodge, the Brother will likely remember the Lodge when it is in need of something, such as a donation.

Combating apathy in the Lodge requires some proactive leadership by the Lodge officers, not reactive. It is necessary to plan meaningful Lodge events in advance, promote and execute accordingly, and follow-up to review what worked well and what didn't. Before you can get the Craft to perspire, you need to inspire them first.

You will not have any problems with apathy as long as the Craft believes the Lodge is fun and interesting; they will WANT to come to Lodge as opposed to feeling coerced into attending. But if Lodge is perceived as boringly repetitive, political, or lacks substance, your Lodge room will look more like a racquetball court as opposed to a Masonic Lodge.

Keep the Faith.

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Failing

WBro. Tim Bryce, Florida

I was Worshipful Master of my lodge just three short years ago. Like any Master, I experienced the usual ups and downs but, overall, I think I had a pretty good run and hope the Craft feels that I left the Lodge better off than when I was first installed Master. Perhaps the biggest lesson I learned was from a Past Master who advised me, "Don't be afraid to try new things and fail." Excellent advice which I pass on to any incoming Worshipful Master. If we do nothing but maintain the status quo, then our story is told. We should always be looking for new and imaginative ways for improving the fraternity. Change is natural and we should embrace it, not fear it. This is why I tried new things during my year and although some things were successful, I also experienced my share of flops.

Fortunately, there wasn't anything catastrophic and this is why I feel I'm a little smarter today.

If we as a fraternity are to make any progress, either at the Lodge level or higher, we must be willing to try new ideas and be willing to accept our failures. I am reminded of the passage from Bro. Rudyard Kipling's poem, "IF":

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-
and-toss, And lose, and start again at your
beginnings And never breathe a word about
your loss;*

Some people fear failure of any kind, large or small, whether it be a major business transaction or a game of tiddledywinks. No, I do not suggest we should deliberately try to botch something, but we should accept failure with dignity, learn from it, and become stronger. But to do absolutely nothing, because we are afraid of making a mistake and looking bad, would be tragic.

So, did I bat 1.000 during my year as Worshipful Master? Hardly. I went down swinging a few times. But I also hit a few out of the park and drove in some runs. Because of this, I would like to believe that my Lodge was better off simply because we weren't afraid to try.

Let me leave you with this quote from Bro. Theodore Roosevelt of Matinecock Lodge No. 806 F. & A.M.; entitled, "Daring Greatly":

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes up short again and again; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails Daring Greatly so that his place shall never be with those timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.

Keep the Faith.

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Roswell Lodge MELD 2010 Program

All courses conducted at Roswell 165, 1054 Alpharetta Street, Roswell, 30077

Roswell Lodge is offering all seven Masonic Education and Leadership Development (MELD) classes starting the first Wednesday in May (May 5, 2010). The MELD program is a great way to improve yourself in Freemasonry and learn more about our great Fraternity. These classes are open to all Master Masons in Georgia. So, even if you are not a member of Roswell Lodge we want to invite you to join us in fellowship and learning.

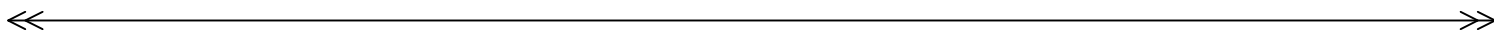
(The deadline for registration was April 1, 2010, but you can probably attend if you have your own literature. Please contact Bro. Powell for specifics.)

When signing up for the classes please provide us with the method you will be selecting and the books needed if less than the full list.

For class registration or more information please e-mail James Powell at jbpowell78@gmail.com or call at (404)-939-6712. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you at the Roswell Lodge MELD 2010 Program. Listed below is the full class schedule (all classes will begin at 6:30 PM).

Awards will be presented at the Regular Communication of Roswell Lodge No. 165 on Thursday, September 2, and we hope that all participants will be present to receive their certificates and pins.

| | | |
|--------|----------------|------------|
| 05 May | Investigations | Scope TBD |
| 12 May | Mentoring | Scope TBD |
| 19 May | History 1 | Qs 1-50 |
| 26 May | History 2 | Qs 51-100 |
| 02 Jun | Parl. Proc. 1 | Qs 1-50 |
| 09 Jun | Parl. Proc. 2 | Qs 51-100 |
| 16 Jun | Etiquette | Qs 1-50 |
| 23 Jun | Manual 1 | Qs 1-50 |
| 30 Jun | Manual 2 | Qs 51-75 |
| 07 Jul | Code 1 | Qs 1-50 |
| 14 Jul | Code 2 | Qs 51-100 |
| 21 Jul | Code 3 | Qs 101-150 |



Fifth District Awards Deadline and Criteria

For more information, visit <http://5dist.morelight.org>

The Fifth District recognizes the Mason of the Year and the Lodge of the Year by evaluating those submissions which are received by the Secretary by the cutoff date, August 1st. Submissions should cover lodge activities from August of the previous year through July of the present year.

There is no required format or length for these submissions, and you can view submissions from the past few years to see what other lodges have done and how they have composed their submissions.

Brethren, this is not a chance to show other lodges that you are better than they are - it is a chance to inspire brethren in other lodges to strive for continual improvement.

Please help improve the Masonic experience by sharing examples of success from your own lodge with others - and you just might learn something from the lodge in the next town over.



Pictured: J. Aubrey Lewis, Senior Grand Deacon (pictured as Master of the 5th District), presenting the 5th District Lodge of the Year award at the 100th Annual Convention in 2004.

