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IN EVERY ISSUE

SNAPSHOT 7 Masons4Mitts and its youth partners, including the Junior Giants, hit the field for their 12th season together.

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MASONIC ASSISTANCE Through lodge outreach volunteers, Masonic Outreach Services is able to be everywhere at once, delivering crucial services to those in need.

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DONOR PROFILE 44 An aviation expert, this SoCal Mason has seen Masonic relief up close. That's why now, he makes a point of giving back.

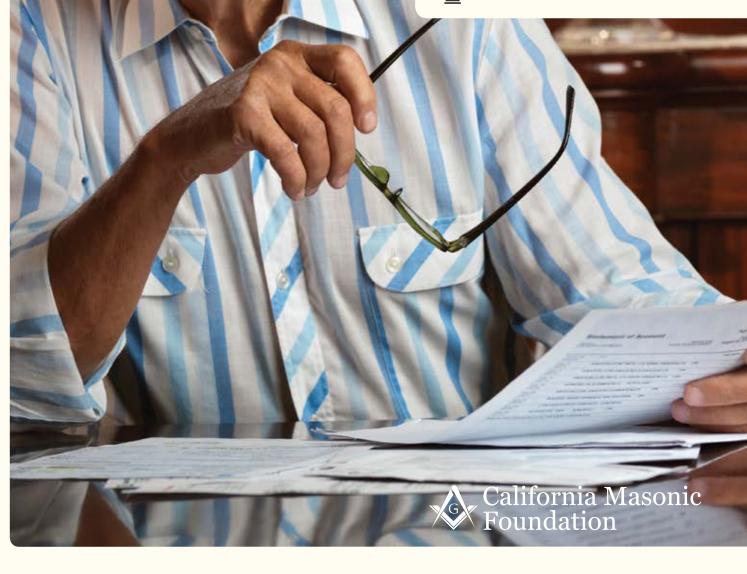
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SNAPSHOT

Play Ball!

IT'S BEEN TWO SEASONS since many of the youth baseball and softball leagues operated through the charitable foundations of California's Major League Baseball teams were able to take the field. But at long last, the legions of young ballplayers—including more than 24,000 kids across California, Nevada, and Oregon associated with Junior Giants—are back in business. This season is the 12th year that California Masons have partnered with the San Francisco Giants, Los Angeles Dodgers, L.A. Angels, and San Diego Padres through Masons4Mitts to support their youth programs. Learn more about the partnership, and the ways it has grown to incorporate more off-the-field programming on page 10. To donate, visit Masons4Mitts.org.

JUNIOR GIANTS PLAYERS TEAM UP BEFORE ONE OF THE NON-COMPETITIVE LEAGUE'S GAME DAYS.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS COMMUNITY FUND

CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

A TIME OF REBIRTH

This spring, our fraternity stirs back to life.



As we come out of the winter months and into spring, we see renewal all around us. There is a time for all seasons, but I especially love spring. The hills transform from golden yellow to a vibrant green. The flowers begin to bloom on the trees and the bees go to work pollinating them—reminders that even when things look bleak, there is hope for a fresh beginning.

Mortality might seem like a strange theme for our magazine. But it's an important concept in

Freemasonry, so I think it's fitting that we take this time to delve into the Masonic customs and traditions regarding death and rebirth and the "celestial lodge" above.

That sense of starting again is similar to what's going on right now in our lodges, which are emerging (hopefully for good) from two years of pandemic. We are finally able to come together and meet in person, rekindle relationships with fellow members, and restart the activities that make our lodges such vibrant places. It's also a time for us to begin the process of holding degrees and admitting new prospects into our fraternity. They too will join us in our labors as, like the bees, we work to pollinate our society with the tenets of brotherly love, relief, and truth.

When we are raised as Master Masons, we learn about the hope of resurrection. I love that when the time comes for us to finally lay down our working tools, we are brought back to the same passage of Scripture. This brings our Masonic journey full circle. I wish you all the renewal of the spring season and good health. May the Supreme Architect of the Universe watch over you, your families, and our beloved craft.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Jeffery M. Wilkins Grand Master of Masons in California

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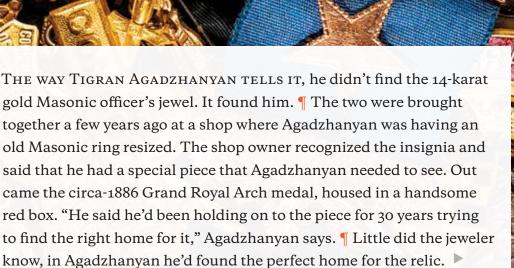
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Another Man's Treasure FOR SOME, MASONIC

ARTIFACTS ARE MORE THAN KEEPSAKES. BY IAN A. STEWART PHOTOGRAPHS BY WINNI WINTERMEYER



Ε

Covering California

Freemasonr

MG



TIGRAN AGADZHANYAN FLANKED BY MASONIC CERTIFI CATES. TRACING **BOARDS, AND** OTHER MEMENTOS **INSIDE OAKLAND** DUPANT ROCKRIDGE **LODGE Nº 188**

Only 25 years old, Agadzhanyan, of Live Oak Nº 61 and Oakland Durant Rockridge Nº 188, is already one of the state's most enthusiastic collectors of Masonic artifacts, jewelry, and regalia. At his East Bay home, stored in museum-grade archival boxes and acid-free preservation sleeves, live more than 800 Masonic artifacts, from officer's pins to tracing boards. In his free time, Agadzhanyan, a graduate student

in government at Harvard (he's taking classes remotely), can be found trawling eBay or flea markets for fraternal keepsakes.

Agadzhanyan recounts some of his antique hunts with the zeal of an obsessive. "I've definitely been called crazy," he admits. Once, at an antiques warehouse in Monterey, he recalls feeling "something cosmic-it's like there's something here and I have to rescue it." Sure enough, he spotted

a pair of Masonic certificates from the early 1900s to add to his collection.

That feeling is common in serious collectors, says Heather Calloway. Calloway is the former managing director at the Scottish Rite Museum in Washington, D.C., and now executive director of university collections at the Center for Fraternal Collections and Research at Indiana University. "People find them fascinating," she says of Masonic artifacts. "They tell the story of American history, of American life."

However, for all their historical significance, it's rare for major museums and archives to collect fraternal mementos. Only a few institutions, including the Grand Lodge of California, have a professionally managed repository. "So basically, you have people who are really passionate about these organizations who are collecting so their history doesn't disappear." Agadzhanyan's first exposure

to the that history came as an undergrad at UC Berkeley, when he walked by the former lodge hall of Durant № 268, just west of campus. He eventually joined the consolidated Oakland Durant Rockridge № 188 and became involved in helping sort through the lodge's archives. Fascinated by the old memorabilia, he began searching online for pieces associated with the lodge. That led him to an apron from the 1920s that had been owned by a past member of the lodge. With that, Agadzhanyan's collection was off and running.

Today, among his most impressive pieces are a Royal Arch pendant from 1857 and an officer's jewel from 1840. But often it's the pieces with a personal connection

that are his most prized-such as the Scottish Rite certificate he inherited from his late mentor, Albert Keshishian. "They're not necessarily for me," he says. "They're for something bigger, to preserve our fraternity's history."

Adam Kendall hears similar sentiments all the time. As the executive director of the Oakland Scottish Rite Historical Foundation, he's helping build out its archive and museum. That often means sifting through dozens of pieces, trying to spot the ones with interesting histories. Recently, he says, he was able to find and purchase a trinket with just such a story. The item is a small pin featuring a

TRAVELODGE

A Historic Lodge, Now with LEDs

THE 19TH-CENTURY HALL IN BENICIA **GETS A 21ST-CENTURY MAKEOVER.**

AFTER 171 YEARS, the desire for a facelift is understandable. The same is true of the historic 1850 Benicia Masonic Hall, the very first lodge hall built in California.

In 2021, the building, which is listed on the **National Register of Historic Places, underwent** extensive renovations that included installing new windows and light fixtures, upgrading bathrooms and kitchen space, and applying a fresh coat of paint and new carpeting to the 50-person lodge room. In addition, the hall includes a small reception

area and a museum and library on the first floor. Originally the home of Benicia № 5, the hall was

sold in 1888 when the lodge outgrew the building and moved next door to 106 West J St. For more information

From then until 1950, the historic site was used as a union hall and, during World War I, as a rooming house. The

Grand Lodge of California, which had purchased it years earlier, took over the hall in 2014, and it has since been available for rent for special degrees

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CIVILIZATION

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winged heart on one side and a bird set within a compass on the other. The pins were worn for an 1893 burial presided over by Edwin Sherman, the founding father of the Scottish Rite on the West Coast. The service was in memory of José Ignacio Herrera y Cairo, a former governor of Jalisco, Mexico, who was killed during the Mexican Revolution. Before his death, he asked that his heart be preserved to show he'd died for his devotion to Masonic principles.

Years later, Herrera's sister transported the mummified organ to Oakland to be interred at Mountain View Cemetery. Thousands of Masons wearing

the custom-made pins escorted his remains to the gravesite.

So when Kendall saw one of the pins for sale on eBay for \$50, he jumped on it.

Like Agadzhanyan, Kendall speaks of his collecting as an obligation rather than a hobby. "I've never refused even a plain white apron," he says. "My fear is, What if it's important?"

That's how Agadzhanyan felt when he first saw the Royal Arch medal at the jewelry shop. Although it was out of his usual price range, he was compelled to take it home. "If I didn't buy it, someone was going to buy it and melt it for face value," he says. "It was for the greater good." 🚸



and other events. Today the hall is home to two new lodges, Benicia Nº 877 and Carquinez Nº 858. And unlike their predecessors, they say they don't mind the lack of elbow room.

"For us as a newly chartered, small lodge, Benicia



Hall fosters a sense of intimacy and history," says Vance Langford, secretary of Benicia № 877. He says the

blend of 19th-century ambiance and modern touches—like dimmable LED lights—makes the hall a perfect space for "magical and memorable" monthly festive boards. 🚸 — JUSTIN JAPITANA



MEMBER PROFILE

Eric de Jesus

Member since 2009 **Burlingame** Nº 400

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAYCE CLIFFORD

FOR SOME, JOINING the Navy represents a way to travel the world and broaden their horizons. Or to earn a career and represent their country. For Eric de Jesus, it was a way to front-kick his competitors. Today, de Jesus is the owner and headmaster of

the MyKicks taekwando center in Burlingame and a member of two Bay Area Masonic lodges. His CV is even longer than that, though-and includes a stint as a corporal with a special taekwondo unit in the

Philippine Navy. Here, de Jesus, who is a black belt in two disciplines (taekwando and karate) fills us in on his life in martial arts and how Masonry has brought his many passions together.

California Freemason: I take it you started practicing taekwando at a very young age.

Eric de Jesus: I started practicing karate first. But in the Philippines there were no scholarships for karate, so I switched to taekwando, which had more potential. Taekwando is the dominant martial art there because it's an Olympic sport. Most high schools have a team, and colleges give scholarships. That's how I was able to finish my studies in Manila. Without the scholarship, my parents couldn't have supported my education.

CFM: And how did you wind up practicing martial arts with the military?

EDJ: I was on the Philippine National Team and had competed in some local tournaments. From there, I was enlisted by the Navy because of my skill. That's how they do it there. It was a special service unit for athletes; we competed in the World Military Championships against other countries. I came in fourth in the middleweight division.

CFM: What brought you to the United States? **EDJ:** I stopped competing when I broke my foot, and started working as an instructor in Manila. In 2003, I brought a student to America to compete in the U.S. World Open, and he won a gold medal. I came back the next year and met my wife.

CFM: How did you launch your business? **EDJ:** At first, I was studying in a nursing program. But I found a location in the Burlingame Plaza to start my dojo. It was just me and my wife. We started from scratch-from zero. No students, no contacts. Luckily, this was before the housing crash, and we were able to build up to about 50 students and sustain ourselves during that time. It was all word of mouth.

CFM: Have you met any other Mason martial arts practicioners here?

EDJ: Yes, two of my instructors are Masons. One is my brother, Raffy de Jesus, who came to the United States after I did. He is a member of Burlingame № 400. He had his wedding reception at the lodge. That's how our other instructor, Gilbert Jamena, was introduced to Masonry. Now he's a member of **Coastside Nº 762**. \diamondsuit –*IAS*

PHILANTHROP

SIL.

New Pitch for Masons4Mitts

YOUTH BASEBALL LEAGUES RETURN WITH A FOCUS ON MORE THAN THE MITT.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE DODGERS FOUNDATION

LATER ON, THERE'D be time to learn a proper fastball grip and the technique of the drag bunt. But first, the 100 or so young boys and girls, all clad in Dodgers blue and white, were going to learn the basics. As in, the basics of exercise: Jumping jacks. Kneetouchers. Burpees.

On this day, the kids participating in the Dodgers' flagship youth baseball and softball program, called Dodgers Dreamteam, hardly touched a bat or ball. Instead, the event was one of several clinics the program sponsors in which the young players run through a series of drills meant to promote overall physical fitness. "It's about being active, having fun," says Sean Mulligan, manager of youth

programs for the Dodgers Foundation. What it wasn't really about was evident: playing baseball.

For the Dodgers Foundation, that's by design. Since first launching its youth baseball and softball leagues (originally called Dodgers RBI), Dodgers Dream-

team has grown to incorporate a wide range of non-baseball-related programming with a focus on issues from health care to education to college and career accelerators. The result is a series of events at which kids have access to information, resources, and services they may not otherwise receive.

(Most of the leagues are in communities where the majority of children receive free or reduced-price school lunches.) "We use the term 'bigger than baseball,'" says Tiffany Rubin, director of programs for the Dodgers Foundation. "Yes, the kids are signing up to play the sport, but

our program is about more than just the sport itself."

For the California Masonic Foundation, which through Masons4Mitts is one of the title sponsors of the program, that assessment fits like, well, a glove. Says Doug Ismail, president of the Foundation, "Masons4Mitts is essentially about leveling life's playing field and providing opportunities for

kids in under-resourced communities. We do this by providing young people with a high-quality summer learning experience. And of course it has to be fun, which is why we ensure that every kid has a mitt. That's what makes it so special."

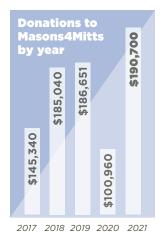
As more leagues return to the diamond (after what has been, for many, a two-year absence), that's increasingly a prism through which Ismail views Masons4Mitts. Since launching in 2009, the effort has raised more than \$1.5 million to support the charitable foundations of the Dodgers, San Francisco Giants, Los Angeles Angels, and San Diego Padres. In each case, the Foundation is the largest donor, or among the largest.

Similar to the Dodgers Dreamteam's "bigger than baseball" mantra, the San Francisco

> Giants Community Fund's Junior Giants program, its flagship youth baseball and softball league, also emphasizes initiatives focused on health, education, and violence prevention. Coaches lead discussions with players on character-develop-

ment topics like bullying. "It's really an education program," says Creston Whiting-Casey, a Mason with Washington Nº 20 and a Junior Giants volunteer coach. "That's where Masons can really plug in. It's not just a mitt." ∲ −IAS

To donate or learn more. visit Masons4Mitts.org.







The Diplomats' Lodge

AT LA JOLLA Nº 518, MEMBERSHIP IS A MASONIC MELTING POT.

Lodge of Iran in Exile and Baja California walk into a bar. That's not the beginning of a joke—it really happened one day in 2016. Almost, anyway. It wasn't a bar; it was **La Jolla Nº 518**, where these sorts of impromptu global meetups are fairly common—and definitely welcome.

THE GRAND MASTERS of the Grand

Though small and unassuming from the street, La Jolla № 518 has played an out-

size role in both California Masonry and international Masonic relations, particularly when it comes to the Grand Lodge of Iran in Exile.

It all started shortly after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which sent thousands of Iranians fleeing their homeland, with many finding refuge in the



communities of Southern California. This influx of immigrants proved a special boon for La Jolla № 518, as it led to a membership surge, says lodge master Ata Zarieh. "First just one or two, but soon many more" Iranian members joined the lodge, he says.

That relationship was turbocharged in 2009, when the Grand Lodge of California entered into an agreement to share

its Masonic jurisdicton in the state with the Grand Lodge of Iran in Exile, a network of lodges comprised of ex-pats who'd immigrated to the United States. (Masonic lodges were banned in Iran following the revolution.) Local chapters of the Grand Lodge of Iran in Exile hold meetings in Los Angeles MEMBERS OF LA JOLLA Nº 518 CELEBRATE DURING THEIR LODGE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION IN MARCH.

and Orange County, as well as in other U.S. cities. Naturally, members of La Jolla № 518 have been enthusiastic about visiting their fellow countrymen's lodges. And today, members of La Jolla № 518 and **Koorosh Lodge № 4**, of the Grand Lodge of Iran in Exile, frequently sit in on each other's degree ceremonies.

"We began to take on an international flavor," Zarieh says of the La Jolla group. That extended beyond just the Iranian influence. Like other California lodges along the state's southern border, La Jolla № 518 has a sister lodge in Mexico, **Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc № 15**. It was that relationship that precipitated a visit from the grand master of the Grand Lodge of Baja California in 2016, on a day that the grand master of the Grand Lodge of Iran in Exile happened to be paying his respects as well. "They met there in our lodge room, and

"With so many good men of different ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds, prospects can always find someone who resonates with them." not long thereafter the two grand lodges formally recognized each other," Zarieh explains. "I'm not saying we had something to do with that, but they did meet here first."

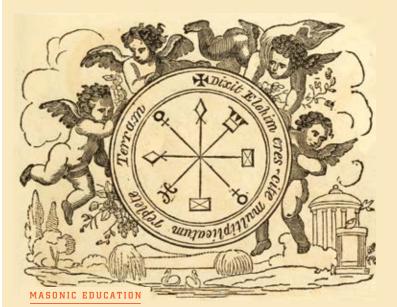
Now, as the lodge celebrates its 100th anniversary, more than half a dozen members of La Jolla № 518 hold dual

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PHOTOGRAPH

ROGOZIENSKI

BY FRANK



Freemasonry's Spiritual Cousins

THE CALIFORNIA MASONIC SYMPOSIUM EXPLORES THE CRAFT'S CONNECTION TO OTHER ESOTERIC TRADITIONS.

NOTHING EXISTS in a metaphysical vacuum. At least that's the idea behind this year's California Masonic Symposium, the yearly gathering of fraternal researchers, specialists, and other deep thinkers. And Freemasonry is no different, at least where spirituality is concerned.

This year's event, held June 16 and broadcast live online, is titled "The Spiritual Quest and Freemasonry." In it, a roundtable panel will explore the role of spirituality within

the craft—and the many ways that Masonry has both affected and been affected by other esoteric movements. From the

Free and open to the public! Register in advance at freemason.org/symposium.

turn-of-the-century fascination with the occult to today's mystical Kabbalists, Masonry's philosophical reach is long. Rosicrucianism, Perennialism, Theosophy—the list of spiritualist movements that share DNA with Masonry is practically endless.

But is that spiritual quest the *point* of Freemasonry? It's a question the speakers will debate, says Dago Rodriguez, a past master of **South Pasadena Nº 290** and one of the event's organizers. "We see more and more Masons coming into our lodges trying to find a connection on that spiritual level," he says.

Among the panelists are Henrik Bogdan, author of Western Esoteric and Rituals of Initiation and and a board member of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism. Joining him are Josef Wäges, a member of **Plano Nº 768** in Texas, expert on high-degree Masonry, and editor of several books on mystical orders; and Lon Milo DuQuette, a writer, recording artist, humorist, and expert on Western mystery traditions, magick, and the occult. –/AS

MEMENTO

Masonry offers a road map to a better life. That's why it pays homage to death.

MAN IS WALKING through a mostly deserted cemetery when he comes upon a memorial service in progress. The gathering seems different somehow. Curious, he stops to listen.

Dozens of men of all ages are lined up in pairs, side by side, marching toward the casket, all dressed in dark suits and wearing simple white aprons. Another apron is laid out atop the casket.

The speaker's eulogy is full of arcane terms and esoteric references. Finally, he holds up a sprig of acacia, and on behalf of those present, offers the deceased a final valediction. "Thy spirit shall spring into newness of life and expand in immortal beauty, in realms beyond the skies," he recites. "Until then, dear brother, until then, farewell!"

This is a Masonic funeral service. Apart from the cornerstone-laying ceremony at a building dedication, a Masonic funeral is one of the most visible public displays of Freemasonry. In 2020, a Masonic funeral service was performed for the civil rights leader and congressman John Lewis at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. Two centuries prior, George Washington received a Masonic send-off at his public memorial.

The Masonic funeral ceremony is one of the most conspicuous examples of Masonic values materialized into action. It's also very often the prism through which outsiders first encounter the craft—a rare glimpse into the lodge life of the deceased that many know little about. That's fitting, because the concepts of death, rebirth, and legacy are important elements to the teachings of Masonry.

Today, these tend to be abstract ideas, jumping-off points for discussion of esoteric concepts. But historically, managing death has been one of the most important functions of the fraternity. Making sure that a departed brother receives a proper burial and remembrance has traditionally been one of the most important benefits of Freemasonry. Even now, the fraternity plays an important role in times of death. Masons are known

to travel from miles around to attend the funeral services of these brothers who show up to honor him. It shows that this their fellow members, even those belonging to other lodges. was a person who lived and meant something. I appreciate Glenn Gordon Whiteside is one such member. Having that, and I'm sure our brothers who are no longer here appregrown up in a Masonic family and been a member of the Order ciate it, too."

of DeMolay, he estimates that he has attended at least 70 Masonic funerals. Whether or not he knew the deceased personally, Whiteside says, he considers it his duty to stand in as a representative of the fraternity, just as generations of Masons have done before. "It's your job to let the family know that Masonry was a part of his life, that he was respected, and to show that he was our brother," Whiteside, of Columbia Brotherhood Nº 370 in San Francisco, says.

John Bermudez is another such member. As the general manager of Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma and a member of California № 1, he says, "What I find most impressive about Masonic funerals is that they show that we value our members' lives." Often in his job, he's witnessed services where hardly any family members attend. "But with Masonry, you have all



REMEMBER LIFE

Freemasonry is often referred to as a system of morality, one intended to help guide members toward a more fulfilled life. But the context of those life lessons is often mortality. From the ritual death and rebirth that members undergo to the symbolism of the eternal soul, Masonry attempts to provide its members with "inspired vision to enable us to look with faith beyond the veil," as is said during the funeral rite.

Perhaps the most common of these symbols is the concept of memento mori-the reminder of one's inevitable demisetypically represented by the skull and crossbones. (The symbol, while not specific to Freemasonry, appears in certain Masonic



contexts, particularly among the Knights Templar, a Christian offshoot of the fraternity.) Though the skull has come to represent all things spooky in popular culture, for centuries memento mori has been used in art and literature as an uplifting device. That's most evident in the 17th-century art form of the vanitas, or still-life paintings depicting the pleasures of life juxtaposed with symbols of death or ephemerality, like bubbles or wilting flowers. By reminding us that our lifetime is short, memento mori invokes another Latin phrase—carpe diem, an admonition to live your fullest life here and now.

The skull isn't the only visual representation of memento mori. Within Masonry, they are legion. The hourglass-sometimes shown with wings-is a reminder of the unceasing march of time. According to Albert Mackey's Masonic encyclopedia, the hourglass "reminds us by the quick passage of its sands of the transitory nature of human life." Similarly, the



"If you think you know all the answers, then why bother exploring?"

sprig of acacia, an evergreen leaf referenced during the Masonic funeral ceremony, is described as "an emblem of our faith in the immortality of the soul" and symbolizes "perpetual renovation."

Other Masonic symbols echo that theme: Father Time, or Saturn, is seen in Masonic contexts as a reminder that "time, patience, and perseverance will enable him to accomplish the great object of a Freemason's labor"-a phrase echoed in the Masonic funeral service, when the deceased is finally called from his labor. Finally, the ruler, or 24-inch gauge, symbolizes the 24 hours of the day. During the funeral ritual, the master invokes the ruler while stating, "During the brief space allotted to us here, we may wisely and usefully employ our time, and, in the mutual exchange of kind and friendly acts, promote the welfare and happiness of each other."

OUESTIONS OF FAITH

Any discussion of death and the afterlife inevitably leads to an ontological reckoning. To say that one believes in life after death or in the existence of the soul is an inherently spiritual statement, an expression of faith. Even distinguishing material and spirit, for some, raises uneasy metaphysical questions. It's not surprising that for most Americans, death can be an uncomfortable topic.

Masonry, in dealing with such questions, treads a fine line. Luis Martinez, a member of Golden Gate **Speranza** № 30, is an expert in comparative religion. "Freemasonry is not a religion. However, it is religious," he explains. While Masons point out the universality of Masonry, which has always been open to candidates of all faiths, most jurisdictions (including California) specifically require candidates to express a belief in God-or at least in a higher power.

Despite its many lessons on life and death, Martinez points out that Masonry isn't dogmatic about mortality and the afterlife. He, for one, is comfortable with leaving room for mystery. "If you think you know all the answers, then why bother exploring?"

That's a sentiment shared by others in the fraternity. "If you were to ask 10 Masons about life after death, you would get 10 different opinions," says Kyle Burch of Friendship Lodge № 210 in San Jose. Burch is the spiritual director of the Spiritual Growth Institute and an expert on Rosicrucianism and other esoteric traditions. While Masonry demands faith from its members, he says, the details of that faith are left to the individual.

Such personal interpretation extends to questions of the afterlife. To some, winged cherubs playing harps might be an image of heaven, while reincarnation and the continuation of the cosmic life cycle is a reality for others. To others, death is final, an eternal sleep. But even that view can be imbued with meaning: It may represent the soul's reunification with its source, absorbed like a drop of water returning to the ocean.

While Freemasonry may offer its members a context for approaching questions of death and the afterlife often

left unexplored within secular society, those lessons are not necessarily unique to the craft. Many cultures and faiths involve stories of rebirth or resurrection. This theme was especially captivating to the adherents of the ancient mystery schools that provide a philosophical backdrop to Freemasonry, such as the Eleusinians, whose initiates performed a mock death and rebirth ritual in which a man was born again. "The death-before-death ritual is relatively universal across cultures and religious belief systems," Burch says. "I think this speaks to the universal truth of this concept."

Mackey, too, acknowledges the common themes between the Eleusinian Mysteries and Freemasonry. Both systems used allegory and a morality play to convey their message. Mackey interprets that message

An English 1825

tracing board by

John Harris Jr.

depicting the

Master Mason degree.

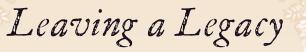


as "the restoration from death to eternal life," he writes, culminating when "the initiate ceased to be a *mystes*, or blind man, and was thenceforth called an epopt, a word signifying he who beholds."

In facing one's death, even if only as an act, it's hoped that one will confront the fear of mortality and live with courage and intention.

SAYING FAREWELL

"Our brother has reached the end of his earthly toils," state the words of the California Masonic funeral ritual. "The brittle thread which bound him to earth has been severed and the liberated spirit has winged its flight to the unknown world. The silver cord is loosed ... the spirit has returned to God who gave it." Masonic Mourning Piece for Rev. Ambrose Todd. 1809 by Eunice Pinney, Windsor, Connecticut



Masonic estate planners on the importance of confronting the end.

"It's said that our character is set by the time we are 8 years old. The same is true of how we handle money. When we are intentional with what we do with our financial resources—both while living and after we are gone we are sharing our values with those we love." —PGM RUSS CHARVONIA, FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Channel Islands № 214

"Several years ago in our lodge, a very young father of four passed away unexpectedly, throwing his family into chaos. The outpouring of support from Masons was on an epic level, from all corners of the planet. However, one of the unexpected legacies was that it caused other families to think about their own situations and answer questions like, 'How would my family pay for this?' or 'Who would take care of us?'"

—Wil Smith, Chairman of Grand Lodge Investment Committee and Past Master, Irvine Valley № 671

"Tomorrow is promised to no one. The planning you do today will alleviate a great headache for someone down the road. So leave a trail of breadcrumbs for your loved one the name of your key advisors, contacts, website logins and passwords—and some basic thoughts on the the how and why of you set things up the way you did."

> —Eric Hatfield, Grand Pursuivant, Santa Monica-Palisades № 307

"By creating a charitable remainder trust and funding it with highly appreciated assets like stocks, you neither incur capital gains nor pay taxes on the growth or income. Not only can this provide a lifetime income for you and your spouse, but you can leave a charitable gift that, like the acacia, will be your enduring legacy."

—Alex Teodoro, Trustee of CMF and CMMT Past Master, Pacific-Starr King № 136

"This is simple stuff, but it's important: Make sure your passwords are easy to find among your estate-planning papers, particularly for your bank or brokerage accounts. If you have a safety deposit box, make sure your heirs are named as co-signers and that the combination to any safe you own is similarly memorialized."

> —David Studley, attorney Past Master, Calaveras Keystone № 78



A vintage Knights Templar apron featuring the skull and crossed bones a frequent motif within the order.

These words echo Ecclesiastes 12:6. There are layers of meaning in the symbols of the thread and the cord, both of which carry significance in Freemasonry. Heaven, in the Masonic service, is described as the "celestial lodge above."

George Whitmore is perhaps the Mason in this state who's best-acquainted with that particular lodge. As a past assistant grand lecturer, Whitmore, of **Victorville № 634**, is tasked with certifying Masons to lead Masonic funerals. As such, he's performed the ritual at plenty of them. In each instance, he says, he's reminded of the solemnity of the occasion and makes a point of ensuring each service is performed word-perfect. "He's my brother," Whitmore says of the deceased. "I want to afford him every dignity and honor."

Masonic concepts of the soul, immortality, and reincarnation may seem heady for most. But as technology increasingly forces more philosophical reckoning with questions of humanism, there's room for a spiritual framework for approaching our mortal end—and the lessons it holds for our time on earth.

Even Einstein understood that. Michelle Thaller, a physicist with NASA, summarized his theory this way: "Time is a landscape. If you had the right perspective on the universe, you would see all of it laid out in front of you. All past, present, and future as a whole thing."

What Masons are left with, then, is the notion of what might be called the infinite present. The writer Joseph Campbell, who popularized the archetype of the hero's journey, may have captured that sentiment best. "Eternity is that dimension of here and now that all thinking in temporal terms cuts off," he wrote. "The experience of eternity right here and now, in all things, whether thought of as good or as evil, is the function of life."

HENRY W. COIL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY/PHOTOGRAPH BY CHEN DESIGN ASSOCIATES

THE OREVER HOME

OLUMBIA CEME

Masonic cemeteries offer a tantalizing glimpse into the history of the fraternity. Now, a pair of frontier graveyards are being brought back to life.

BY IAN A. STEWART



former Masonic cemeteries being operated by an outside entity; and 23 instances in which a Masonic lodge owned plots within an existing cemetery.

Within a few years, the committee had taken charge of five historic graveyards whose parent lodges had either gone under or consolidated: These included cemeteries in Columbia, Jamestown, Fiddletown, and Michigan Bluff-all in gold country-and, for a time, Fallbrook Masonic Cemetery in San Diego County. It also took over management of the Peter Lassen Grave and Memorial near Susanville, in Lassen County. (Lassen is credited with bringing the first Masonic charter to California.) In each case, the upkeep of the cemeteries was supported with modest funds from the Grand Lodge and managed by volunteers.

For more than three decades, that committee ensured that the sites were maintained. But by the early 1990s, the transfer of responsibility had been passed through several other committees and boards. By and large, the matter had disappeared from public view. It wasn't until 2013, when a new committee began looking into the tax implications of cemetery ownership that the issue came up again. After recommending slight changes to the California Masonic Code, the issue was largely put back to rest.

第一葉の茶を見ています。

T WAS GETTING CLOSE to midnight when the dozen or so members of Logos Nº 861 walked out of the historic Columbia Masonic Hall and into the street. They'd gathered there for their annual lodge retreat, which features a degree conferral and what often turns into a lively festive board dinner. Now it was time for the unofficial third part of the event. Someone brought

along a bottle, and the group headed toward the edge of the tiny gold-rush-era town in rural Tuolumne County, away from the din of the party.

The group hiked through the dark toward the tiny cemetery on School House Street where 110 early members of the fraternity had been lain to rest. In the quiet of the night, the group crossed the picket-fence gate and gathered around a large granite stone where a memorial plaque was embedded. "Soft and safe to thee, my brother, be thy resting place," it read.

The group wandered the overgrown park, stopping to look more closely at headstones dating back to 1853, the year the cemetery opened. At last the members gathered again and, with glasses held aloft, offered three salutes: to one another, to their fellow members around the world, and, finally, to those who'd entered the "celestial lodge above."

Dylan Pulliam, a past master of the lodge, was among those present. For him, the impromptu service resonated

deeply. "It's spiritual," Pulliam says. "It reminds us that our time on earth is short." But it was more than that, too. Being among headstones as old as the state of California, the sense of history on display was practically palpable. "It makes you want to dig deeper," he says.

Pulliam isn't the only person to have that thought. Though seldom used these days and easily forgotten, cemeteries like Columbia's play an important role in the history of California Masonry. In many places, they represent the close link between lodges and their communities.

Beginning in 1852, with the first records of California lodges establishing their own burial sites, Masonic cemeteries have provided a final resting place for some of the most important figures in the state's history. From Shasta to San Diego, they've brought Masons together to celebrate, mourn, and pay homage. Packed to the brim with history, they really do make you want to start digging.

AN UNDERGROUND HISTORY

The first recorded Masonic funeral in the state occurred in 1849, when an unknown figure was found drowned in the San Francisco Bay. The man was carrying a silver shekel that indicated he was a Mark Master Mason, and had tattoos of various Masonic working tools and symbols. An account of the event published in The History of Nevada, 1881 recounts that "A large concourse attend[ed] the burial; the impressive service of the craft was read; the sprig of acacia was dropped into the grave by the hands of men from all quarters of the globe."

During the Gold Rush, these sorts of Masonic send-offs were common. Back then, one of the most important roles of the fraternity was to provide a respectable burial for those who'd died penniless and far from home. Soon California lodges, many of them in the Sierra foothills, began to set aside or purchase plots for members and their families. To this day, Masonic cemeteries abound in the area along Highway 49, including sites in Jamestown, Sonora, and Calaveras County.

Among the most notable of these Gold Rush-era grounds was the Sacramento City Cemetery, where an annex was set aside for members of the city's five Masonic lodges. By the late 19th century, they'd outgrown their corner and banded together to purchase an eight-acre plot adjoining the old graveyard, still known as the Masonic Lawn Association Cemetery.

By and large, these cemeteries were managed by the lodges that controlled them, and later by special associations made up of lodge members. That decentralization meant that it has long been unclear precisely how many Masonic

"It's spiritual. It reminds us our time on earth is short."

cemeteries there are in California. And whether through sales of property, purchased plots, or comanagement arrangements, questions inevitably arose over how lodges were meant to deal with their dead-questions that did not always have easy answers.

By the middle of the 20th century, those issues were front and center. So Grand Master Louis Harold Anderson recommended the formation of a Masonic Cemetery Committee to review the status of all Masonic cemeteries in the state. "This is not only a safeguard to the resting places of the brethren who have gone this way before us, but it is a guarantee by California Masonry of today to future generations of Masons that they, too, may rest in peace until time is no more," he wrote. In 1957, the committee made its first report: It concluded that there were 23 cemeteries owned by Masonic lodges in California; eight more owned jointly with another organization, often the Independent Order of Odd Fellows; plus 27



PORTALS TO THE PAST

To visit a Masonic cemetery today is to be reminded of the fraternity's long presence in California-and its relationship to the earliest days of the state.

At the Shasta Masonic Cemetery, which was founded in 1864 and is operated by Western Star Nº 2, headstones include some of the most prominent figures in the town's history. One of them is Daniel Bystle, a pioneer of early Shasta, a charter member of the lodge, and, ironically enough, the town's first undertaker.

Another such local luminary is engineer Frank Doyle, the "father of the Golden Gate Bridge." He is buried in the Masonic section of the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery. In fall 2021, members of Santa Rosa Luther Burbank № 57 came together to install a memorial plaque there honoring Doyle and the more than 100 Masons buried on its grounds. "All the movers and shakers of early Santa Rosa are interred here," says Paul Stathatos, a member of the lodge who volunteers at the cemetery. "There's a lot of history here."

In some cases, the local Masonic cemetery embodies larger historical trends. For many years, Ronald Andaya led a team of volunteers from Anacapa № 710 to clear weeds at the Oxnard Masonic

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETE IVEY



Cemetery. Working there, he learned that the Masonic lodge that managed the cemetery had, in the early 20th century, donated a section of the plot to a nearby Buddhist temple so it could bury its Japanese American members there. Their remains were prohibited at the time from being interred in nearby Ventura. (The cemetery was recently sold to a private real estate developer, though the burial site itself will be preserved.)

For others, the connection to these places is personal. Dennis Huberty, a longtime member of Milton Lodge № 78 (since consolidated into Calaveras Keystone Nº 78), has for years served as the de facto head of the windswept Milton Masonic Cemetery, where headstones date to 1850. "It's a typical pioneer cemetery," he explains. "We've got the place fenced to keep the cattle from tramping all over it." Huberty's great-grandfather, William Samuel Dennis, was a past master of the Milton lodge and first worthy patron of its Eastern Star chapter. He was buried in the cemetery in the 1930s. Says Huberty, "You take care of your dead. It's the most basic reason we're in Masonry: To preserve history and honor those who were in the craft before us."

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RESURRECTION

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It's with precisely that legacy in mind that a new effort is being launched to bring two historic Masonic cemeteries back to life.

The two cemeteries are the Columbia Masonic Cemetery, inside Columbia State Park in Tuolumne County, and a smaller site in nearby Jamestown. Both suffered from deterioration in recent years, but in November 2020, Grand Lodge staff took the first steps toward a full renovation of both sites. That meant repairing fencing and signage, clearing brush, and making other small repairs. At the same time, workers began making detailed surveys of the topography and conditions-assessment reports. The reports lay out a treatment plan for each monument, headstone, and mausoleum. "We had to determine, inventory, and account for every one," says Khalil Sweidy, the Grand Lodge director of financial planning and real estate and a member of Columbia Historic Lodge. The effort involved using ground-penetrating radar and specially trained dogs to scour the grounds for unmarked remains.

The plans detailed in the two reports run to more than 30 pages each. They're also, unsurprisingly, expensive. Now plans are being hatched to fund the most ambitious elements of the work needed to restore the two cemeteries to their former glory. "These cemeteries deserve some attention," Sweidy says. "It reflects well on us when we take care of our cemeteries. We've done a lot of planning and prep work, but there's still a lot to do."

In the meantime, those buried in the old cemeteries aren't going anywhere. And with their weathered monuments, they offer a poignant reminder of the links between generations of Masons. That point was driven home earlier this year for Sammy Hanes, a past master of **Western Star Nº 2** who helps maintain the Shasta Cemetery. The graveyard had been practically wiped out during the 2018 Carr Fire, and a large acacia tree planted there was burned down. This year, though, the first green shoots began to reappear from its roots. Now, the Masonic symbol of regeneration is, once again, coming back to life.

For James Tucker, another member of Logos **№** 861, the Columbia cemetery isn't just a trip back in time. It's also a way to consider the future. "To be there," he says, "you think about some lodge in the year 2100. For them to come to my grave and toast me, that'd just be the best thing ever." 🚸

BY ALLEN YOUNG Care and

The Cast Masons

MORTICIANS ARE SURROUNDED BY DEATH. THAT'S WHY THEY CELEBRATE LIFE.

You'll Ever Meet



ARED MURRAY DIDN'T TALK to his daughter the night she died. But she had reached out to several people in the hours before she was fatally struck by a freight train in Sacramento. The 18-year-old called her mom; she called friends. Kendall even checked herself into a hospital emergency room, as her father had instructed her to do whenever she was having a breakdown. But doctors released her back onto the street. Officially, the medical examiner ruled Kendall's death a suicide. Nobody knows if she was purposefully on the tracks, or if drugs caused her to lose awareness of where she was.

As a professional mortician, Murray is more familiar than most with death. But losing Kendall brought on a level of grief he'd never experienced before. He'd lived his entire life surrounded by reminders of the end-his father and brother both owned their own funeral homes. He remembers watching his father perform embalmings and plan funerals. At various points, the family had even

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lived in their funeral home. In fact, at the time of his daughter's death, in 2019, Murray was closing a deal to purchase the Tracy Memorial Chapel, where today he works as a funeral director.

Murray, a Master Mason from Mount Oso № 460 in Tracy, had always considered himself an empathetic soul. But after Kendall died, he felt even more strongly that he'd been called to help others in his position. At a funeral home, every manifestation of loss is on display-fear, anger, frustration, indecisiveness. Now he regularly shares his story with clients, particularly those burying a child. "Helping them through the process helps me," Murray says. "I don't do it for praise or acknowledgement. I do it because I want to. This could be the worst day of a person's life. If I can help them get through it, that's the reward for me."

That's a familiar refrain among those in Murray's line of work. While morticians come from all backgrounds, the common denominator is an ability to confront death and maintain composure.

Perhaps it's no wonder that among their ranks are a disproportionately high number of Freemasons. A rudimentary search reveals more than 75 members of the fraternity in California listed as either morticians, funeral directors, or related jobs. Masons understand the solemnity of ceremonial rites and have an appreciation for symbolism and allegory concerning death and mortality. That makes them especially well-suited to mortuary work, which requires a deep reservoir of empathy and compassion. In Masonry, the goal is always to strive to do better, says Adrian Howard, a mortician at the Alpha Society funeral home in Burbank and a member of South Pasadena **№ 290**. Masonry asks its practitioners to constantly reflect on the consequences of their actions, he says, and to recognize that life is about deepening relationships with the living. So too does his profession.

Howard works every function of his funeral home: He calls doctor's offices and files death certificates. He facilitates funeral services with priests. He arranges burials and cremations. He visits morgues and flower shops. He carries coffins. Occasionally, he texts family members weeks or months after a funeral just to let them know he cares. When someone dies and lacks family or anyone close to grieve their loss, Howard makes sure their life is still celebrated, as was the case when a 103-year-old woman who'd outlived her entire family passed away and came into his care. Howard arranged for 20 members of his staff to attend a

"This could be the worst day of a person's life. If I can help them get through it, that's the reward for me."

funeral service in her honor. "Funerals are definitely for the living, but out of respect for the person's life, when they pass, we should be there for them," he says.

That's especially true of Masonic funerals. Howard estimates that he's attended at least 50 of those, many for brothers he never met in life. That kind of empathy is the stock-in-trade of the Masonic mortician, he says. "The day you stop caring is the day you need to be out of this business."

Even embalming is an act of love, says Brian Tatro, the operations manager at Cochrane and Wagemann Funeral Directors in Roseville. "This is somebody's loved one," says Tatro, a member of Natoma № 64 in Folsom. "This is an act that should have respect. That helps you get over the gross part."

Bill Fischer has been an embalmer since 1984. The best part of his line of work, he says, is in showing extreme care for the deceased. Death is "a special time," says Fischer, of Reading Trinity Lodge Nº 27. Fischer says he treats every person's body as if it was a member of his own family. As general manager of Janus Advisor, which has 14 funeral homes in Northern California, he instructs his staff to always imagine the family of the deceased in the room watching their loved one being prepared for public viewing. Fischer says the job serves as a daily test of the ideals of Masonry: honesty, respect, and integrity.

Perhaps no lodge better exemplifies that connection than Pacific-Starr King Nº 136 in San Francisco. No fewer than five members there work in the funerary service, including German Lopez, a past master of the lodge, who recently retired after a 54-year career at Cypress Lawn Funeral Home in Colma Lopez's first exposure to the fraternity came through Masonic funerals he witnessed at the cemetery. Struck by the reverence with which members memorialized their deceased brothers, he soon inquired and applied for membership.

Another member of the lodge, Craig Willis, is a licensed embalmer who works on both people and pets. Like so many of his colleagues, it was through his funerary work that Willis connected with

Or, as Fischer puts it, "It helps you appreciate that you have a life. You have today. Do the things you enjoy, and tell the people close to you that you love them."

Murray didn't get that chance the night his daughter died. But having his family take responsibility for preparing her body was, he says, a final act of love for her. He wouldn't have had it any other way. "My dad said the funeral industry was a calling and not a job," he says. "There are people who can handle this industry and those who can't. We have to be the strong person in the room. We have to take people by the hand and show them the steps. \diamondsuit



PHOTOGRAPHS BY

PETER PRATO

Freemasonry. One of Willis's early mentors, Edward Sandmeier, was a member of Pacific-Starr King № 136, and after several conversations about the craft, invited Willis as a guest to a lodge dinner. "When you work in the same room for eight hours a day, you run out of things to talk about," Sandmeier recalls. "Masonry came up, and when he asked about it, I told him, 'You know, you can just come with me to my lodge.'"

And though he's surrounded every day by the trappings of the hereafter, Willis says his experiences as both a mortician and a Mason have evolved his views on the here and now. "Working with dead people, you see death all the time, but you use it to be better."



Opposite: Jared Murray, a second-generation mortician, at his mortuary office in Tracy, seen here.



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Driving an ambulance is about as stressful as it gets. That's when Dondi Manzon falls back on what he's learned from Freemasonry.

BY ANTONE PIERUCCI

death and dying on a daily basis. It's an experience that can rub a man raw if he lets it, especially in the pandemic era. For Guillermo "Dondi" Manzon, an emergency medical technician and former officer for Sunnyside Nº. 577, the philosophical teachings of Masonry are grounded.

Manzon, 58, didn't originally set out to pursue his current line of work. When he immigrated from the Philippines in 2002, he

had a degree in engineering and experience as a pharmaceutical rep. At first he found a job in marketing for a private ambulance company. But he was intrigued by ambulance work itself, and within a few

years he gave up his job to start driving "the bus." "Just like that I was an EMT," he says. Well, not quite: There was training involved. "Lots of training," he says with a laugh.

During his first shift, Manzon immediately had a brush with death. "We got a call for this man who was on dialysis; he was unresponsive," Manzon says. On their way to the hospital, Manzon had an epiphany of sorts. "I remember staring at this man, who was only in his fifties, and thinking to myself, Wow, I need to lead a good life while I can." It took him several more years to find Masonry, sonry has taught me how to live." 🚸

EALTH CARE WORKERS face but when he did, it all clicked. "Here was a group of men who made it their mission to do good in the world," he says. "I knew I wanted to be a part of this force for good right away."

Although he had grown up around Masonry, with his uncle and other relatives in the Philippines belonging to lodges, Manzon had never really thought much soem of his most important tools for staying about the fraternity until he began his second career.

> Over the years, Manzon has clung to Masonic philosophy when times get tough. In a dozen years as an EMT, he's never

GUILLERMO "DONDI" MANZON EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN SUNNYSIDE Nº 577

had a patient die on him, but he's still seen more suffering than most people. "Freemasonry has helped me deal better with my ill patients," he says. "It's given me the

look after people the best way I know how." For Manzon, the most impactful tenet of Masonry is the one that charges a man to be an upright citizen. "That directly translates to my work," he says. "I strive to be a better EMT every day because of it."

tools to be a better man and

In the end, Manzon knows there's only so much he can do for the individuals that pass through his care. But with Masonry in mind, he has a framework to better handle the stress his work can entail. "Religion has taught me salvation after death," Manzon says. "Freema-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RUSS HENNINGS/MOONBEAM STUDIOS



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A musician and erstwhile gravedigger

The

HE FIRST SONG Dylan Luster ever recorded was written after spending an uncommon amount of time among the dead. He was 25 years old, newly sober, and coming off stints as a served as a channel through which his grandfather gravedigger and crematorium worker. At the crema- could offer him guidance from beyond the grave. torium, his task was to crawl into the facility's incin- Finding Masonry at that tumultuous time gave Luster erators to sweep out the residual ash. The furnace was massive—and imposing—reaching temperatures Golden Trowel Norwalk No. 273; the following year, of 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. "The door was like 400 pounds of steel," Luster recalls. "If the chain that was hoisting it up broke, there was no way to lift that thing. Sometimes I think about it—like, jeez, I was in some other mindset."

Years later, the indie-folk singer still finds inspira-

tion in transience. Luster's time at the crematorium

was bookended by a groundskeeping gig at a cemetery

near his childhood home in Norwalk. The work, quiet

and contemplative, suited his temperament. While

ging graves, he let his mind wander. "Once I started

to really sober up, I wanted to go back to the peaceful

same time he decided to get clean, Luster's mother

shared three blue books with him, inscribed with the

words NOVEMBER 6, 1933 INITIATED. They contained

the work *The Symbolism of the Three Degrees* by Oliver

That wasn't Luster's only inspiration. Around the

The grisly work forced Luster to confront big questions about life and death. And it awakened his artistic spirit. In one of his first recorded songs, "Soul Remains," he writes, "I been workin' on my life, through the pain and the trouble and strife / They can break my body, but the soul remains."

"Whatever you do in this world impacts other people. That is kind of where your spirit goes."

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF DYLAN LUSTER

Day Street.

gardening at the cemetery," he says.

Caretaker

reflects on what we leave behind.

The books had belonged to Luster's grandfather, who belonged to a Masonic lodge in Fort Worth, Texas. Though they'd never met, for Luster the books something to work toward. In 2013, he applied to he was raised to Master Mason. In 2019, he affiliated with Yucca Valley Nº 802.

Masonry helped Luster navigate sobriety and process his thoughts. "It can occupy your mind with

DYLAN LUSTER ARTIST & GRAVEDIGGER YUCCA VALLEY Nº 802

different philosophical questions and different threads to pull," he says. It also sharpened his thoughts on death. "When I think about the afterlife, I don't think of some other dimension. I think whatever you do in this world, it impacts other people. That is kind

of where your spirit goes." That outlook in turn helped Luster focus on his music career. In 2016, he released a self-titled EP. Last year, he put out two more singles, "Judy's Highway" and "Eastward Winds."

Both explore those themes of impermanencewatering flower beds, mowing grass, and yes, dig- a common refrain in Luster's work. These days, Luster has a collection of 10 new songs in the works, grouped loosely on the experience of waiting for something to pass. Each song features instruments played and carefully recorded, one track at a time, by the musician. One of the tunes, "Other Side" could be about achieving a goal—like the completion of an album, or completing the degrees—or reaching the other side of this existence. He's leaving it up to the listener to decide. 🚸

Medium

In Hollywood, Chris Sanders is the go-to guy for the esoteric and paranormal.

HOUGH HIS OFFICIAL TITLE on the television 2009, he was featured as an expert speaker in the Hisseries My Ghost Story on A&E's Biography Channel was casting producer, it'd be more accurate to call Chris Sanders a paranormal consultant. His work on the show entailed things like scoutvetting real-life ghost stories.

The

The gig was just one of many to showcase Sand- and horror films. ers' unusual expertise. And in the years since, he's carved out a special niche for himself at the intersec- couple of well-known witches who ran an occult shop tion of esotericism, metaphysics, and Hollywood. "I knew where to look," Sanders says of his foray into what one might call supernatural television program- that Sanders be involved in a proposed reality series—

ming. "I knew how to speak the language of these folks."

Sanders has had a lifelong interest in "the arcane and metaphysical." In 2000, newly single, he moved to Los Angeles in search of something new. A chance encounter led him to a Hare Krishna

temple, right around the corner from Culver City-**Foshay № 467**. He decided to take a leap of faith. "It was a magical moment," he says of approaching the lodge. "My prayers were answered. That sent me out on a whole new path."

Sanders connected immediately to the philosophi- abducted by aliens." cal aspects of Freemasonry, and within a year had lodge officer. In 2008, he became lodge master.

His personal interests have also opened some unlikely doors in Hollywood. While Sanders has had small acting roles in blockbusters like Pirates of the Wonderland, and HBO's True Blood, he's also built him- "The people I've met, the things I've seen and done. I self into an on-screen authority on Freemasonry. In

tory Channel show The Nostradamus Effect, as he was in the 2017 documentary 33 & Beyond: The Royal Art of Freemasonry. In addition, he's served as a producer on the WeTV series Ghosts in the Hood, performed an ing haunted houses, sourcing esoteric experts, and exorcism on the 2013 A&E series American Haunting, and appeared as an actor and producer in several cult

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His entrée came from a suitably unlikely source: A that Sanders frequented. Having been approached by a TV producer, the shop owners recommended

CHRIS SANDERS PARANORMAL CONSULTANT **CULVER CITY-**FOSHAY Nº 467

which eventually became My Ghost Story: Caught on Camera. "They knew I had a background in the paranormal and was good on camera," he says. In February of 2020, Sanders landed

his dream gig: a "fly-on-the-wall show" for a major cable network, shot from the

barstools of the Little A'Le'Inn, a watering hole near Area 51 in Nevada. "You walk into this strange bar, you're at the counter grabbing a beer, and the guy next to you is like, 'I was abducted by Bigfoot,'" he explains of the show's premise. "And you're like, 'Well, I was

Those are actual stories that would have been feabeen raised as a Master Mason and was serving as a tured on the show—if not for COVID-19. Still in early production when the pandemic hit, the project was shelved. It's unlikely that project will be raised from the dead, but in the meantime, Sanders isn't waiting around. Now, he says, his next project will be a memoir. *Caribbean:* At the World's End, Tim Burton's Alice in "I thought, What do I have to offer this world?" he says. have these stories in me. And they should be told."



"I thought, What do I have to offer this world? I have these stories in me. And they should be told."



Silent. Memorial

IN SAN FRANCISCO, AN UNDERWATER REMINDER OF A CENTURY-OLD BATTLE OVER THE FATE OF THE CITY'S DEAD.

By Tony Gilbert and Ian A. Stewart

QUATIC PARK is one of the most picturesque vistas in all of San Francisco, a city of postcard views. A tiny, sandy cove ringed by Ghirardelli Square, Beach Street, and the his-

toric Hyde Street Pier, the park is one of the most reliably sunny spots in town, a favorite of out-of-towners. Most weekend days, you'll see a stream of swimmers, kayakers, and rowers pulling their way across its protected waters. Beyond them, sailboats navigate the choppy bay against the backdrop of the majestic Golden Gate Bridge.

But the charming, jewel box scene belies a more lurid chapter of the city's history. It's invisible to all but the most carefully trained eye. Yet clues of the city's distant past are there in the seemingly mismatched stones that form the base of the sweeping breakwater.

It wasn't long ago that names could still be read on these stones. But with each wave that laps the seawall, the memory

of how the municipal pier was born—as well as many other of the city's large-scale urban projects of the early 20th century—is further erased. These are the tombstones of Aquatic Park, dug up by workers clearing the city's cemeteries a century ago and unceremoniously deposited around San Francisco.

They aren't the only ones. Grave markers can be spotted by the jetty at the Golden Gate Yacht Club, at Ocean Beach, and at the base of the Golden Gate Bridge. Even a walking path in Buena Vista Park is lined with old tombstones, some still visible today. During major building renovations, Gold Rush-era caskets were found beneath the Asian Art Museum, the Legion of Honor, and countless private homes. The city is practically brimming with these morbid reminders from yesteryear.

Like so many other aspects of California history, Freemasonry plays a key role in the story.

ILLUSTRATION BY

A FINAL RESTING PLACE

At the turn of the last century, San Francisco was a city practically full of cemeteries-by one count, as many as 30 within the city's seven-by-seven-mile square. There were graveyards for deceased Chinese, French, German, Italian, Greek, Native American, Japanese, Scottish, and Scandinavian people. There were cemeteries for Jewish, Catholic, and Chinese Christian parishioners, among many others. There were plots for orphans, seamen, firefighters, and members of the typographical union. But perhaps the most elaborate of them all was the 38-acre Masonic Cemetery on Lone Mountain.

The land for the Masonic Cemetery was purchased in 1854 on what is now the University of San Francisco's grounds. It opened a decade later, eventually serving nearly 20,000 souls. Together with the nearby Odd Fellows Cemetery, Calvary Cemetery,

"The broad, serpentine walks, the fountain playing in the center... make it well worth a visit."

and Laurel Hill Cemetery, they made up the "big four" graveyards of Lone Mountain. Built at the height of the so-called "beautification of death" movement, which ushered in a much more theatrical approach to mortuary work, like ornate casket furnishings and elaborate monuments to the deceased, the Masonic was by some estimations the finest of them all. The San Francisco Morning Call newspaper in 1887 described it as "elaborately beautified in floral design, and contain[ing] many handsome monuments." The entrance to the park was marked by a large castellated tomb; other decorations included a white marble obelisk topped by a statue of Grief, and monuments to preeminent San Francisco Masons including the sugar magnate Adolph B. Spreckles and Munroe Ashbury, an early champion of Golden Gate Park and the namesake of Ashbury Street (of the famous Haight-Ashbury district). Other notable figures buried there included Etienne Guittard, the famous French-born chocolatier; Jacob Neff, the Gold Rush mining kingpin elected lieutenant governor in 1899; and the city's most beloved eccentric, Emperor Norton I, a charter member of Occidental Lodge Nº 22.

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An 1880s tourist guidebook went so far as to recommend the cemetery for sightseeing: "The broad, serpentine walks, the fountain playing in the center, the profusion of flowers, and the large number of handsome monuments make it well worth a visit." However, space for the dead began to interfere with space for the living in the growing city. So in 1901, mayor James Phelan banned any new burials or cremations within city limits, kicking off what would become a multi-decade campaign to eradicate the city's profusion of graveyards.

Families of the deceased, incensed by the apparent sacrilege, did not give in without a fight. However, several factors worked against them. First was the urgent need for new housing in the cramped city. Second was a change in tastes, as the Victorianera "garden-park cemeteries" like the Masonic began falling out of fashion. But perhaps most important was the 1906 earthquake, which badly damaged the city's many cemeteries, including the Masonic. In the aftermath, the crumbling graveyards were seen as public eyesores and a threat to public health.

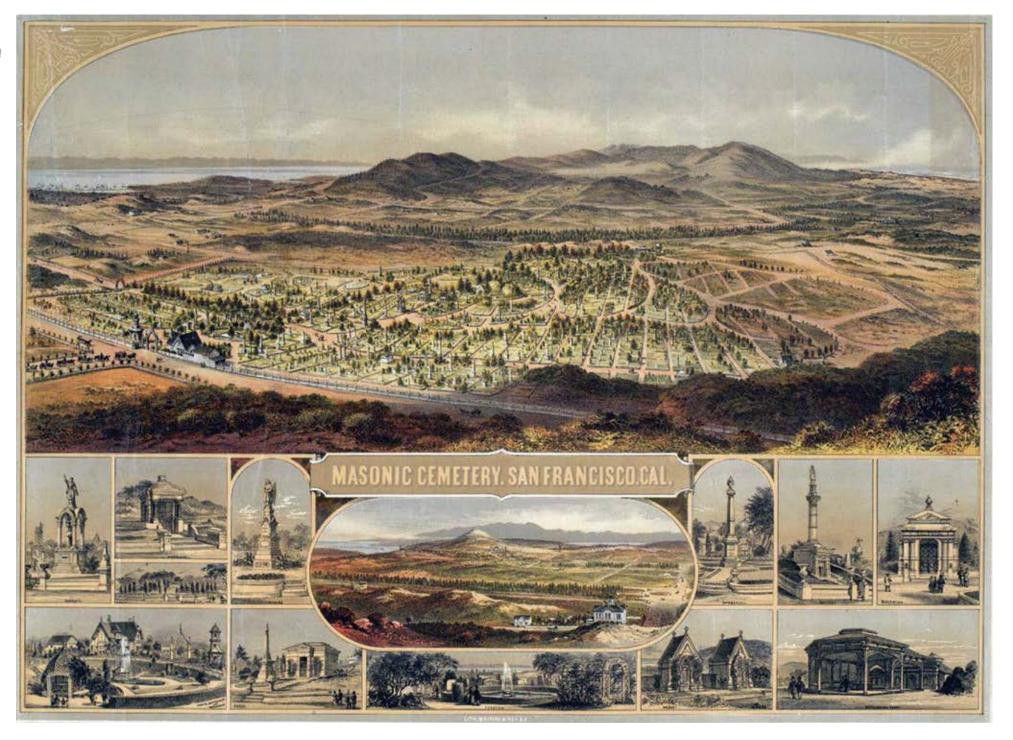
Heated litigation over the forced removal stretched on for years, ultimately reaching the U.S. Supreme Court. But major rulings in 1914 and then 1924 sealed the fate of most of San Francisco's cemeteries. Seeing the writing on the wall, the San Francisco

Masonic Cemetery Association, which managed the site, began negotiating a sale to St. Ignatius College, now the University of San Francisco.

MOVE TO COLMA

The final death knell came in 1930, when the city officially rezoned the area of Lone Mountain, which formally allowed the boards of the big four cemeteries to sell off their land and reinter their dead elsewhere. As the moves began, one cemetery at a time, caskets were dug up and transported south to the sleepy town

Alle still alle still



of Lawndale, now known as Colma, the so-called "city of souls." Today, Colma is home to 18 cemeteries. Nearly 1.5 million people are buried there, 1,000 times its living population.

With the cemetery's closure imminent, the San Francisco Masonic Cemetery Association raised funds to purchase land for a new resting place in Colma called Woodlawn Memorial Park. (In 1996, Woodlawn was sold to a private corporation, but remains the largest de facto Masonic cemetery in the Bay Area.) Most of the bodies originally buried at the San Francisco site were dug up and

transported to Woodlawn, though a few wound up at nearby cemeteries including Olivet Memorial Park, Cypress Lawn, and Greenlawn Memorial Park just a few blocks away.

Many, however, were never removed at all-an exceedingly common occurrence citywide during the great reinterrment period. One study found that at Golden Gate Cemetery (now the site of the Legion of Honor and the Lincoln Park Golf Course), only about 1,000 bodies' remains were ever actually removed, leaving an estimated 18,000 still in the ground. (A museum excavation in 1993 uncovered 800 of them.)

A postcard lithograph from the late 1800s, depicting the Masonic Cemetery bounded by Masonic and Parker avenues and Turk and Fulton streets.



The breakwater at Aquatic Park Cove, in San Francisco, is made up of discarded headstones taken from the city's 19th century cemeteries.

At the four Lone Mountain cemeteries, the herculean task of digging up the deceased was, understandably, challenging. One report described it as "chaotic and hasty." While many caskets could be moved intact, others were in various states of decomposition, and only some of the remains were moved. Others were left "wholly untouched," according to a 2011 archaeological survey conducted on behalf of the University of San Francisco.

In the end, relatively few of the deceased were ever provided with new individual grave markers. Of the 20,000 people buried at the Masonic Cemetery, about 5,000 remains were claimed by family members and reinterred in Colma, according to a fraternity report at the time. The rest—up to 15,000—were, like the rest of the city's unclaimed, placed in mass graves, their tombstones left behind. Even Masonic dignitaries met that fate: Among those moved to an unmarked grave in the common plot was Jonathan Stevenson, the first grand master of California. It wasn't until 1954 that he was reinterred in the California № 1 lodge plot at Cypress Lawn and a memorial plaque was erected in his memory.

RECLAIMING THE REMAINS

"The place of public history is vulnerable to the advance of urban progress," wrote historian Tamara Venit-Shelton of the mass reburial efforts in the Journal of California History. There could hardly be a

"The place of public history is vulnerable to the advance of urban progress."

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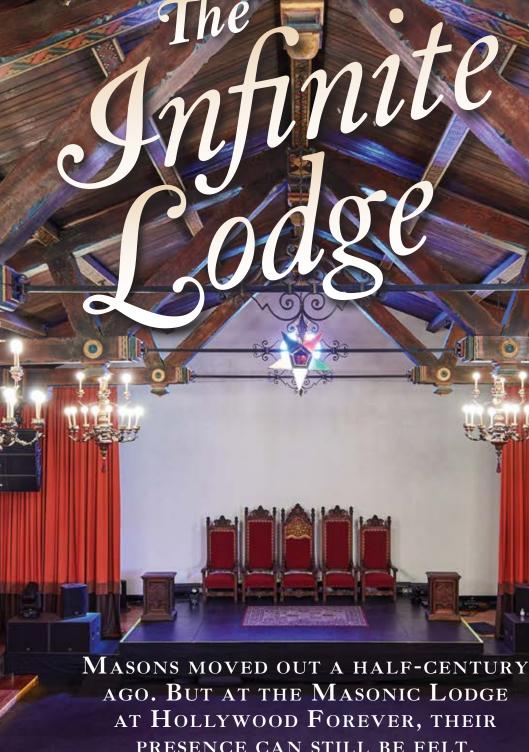
more apt visual metaphor than in the thousands of deserted tombstones left behind in the mass exhumation and reinterment of San Francisco's dead. Families of the deceased were instructed to claim the headstones themselves, but few ever did. Eventually, workers from the city's Department of Public Works collected the thousands of marble and granite stones for use as building materials. According to Shelton, those stones were used in construction projects all over the city, including the breakwaters at Aquatic Park and the municipal yacht harbor, and for paving roads in the North Beach neighborhood.

There are no records of which headstones were sent where. And with the passing of time, their markings have become harder and harder to decipher. But for many old-time members of the city's rowing clubs, which use Aquatic Park as their headquarters, it was only a generation ago that swimmers passing close to the seawall could make out the names of the departed carved into the odd bit of rock. Perhaps in some protected nook or cranny, a Masonic square and compass survives.

It can be hard to reconcile the seemingly pitiless exhumation of the city's deceased with the supposed finality of a casket laid to rest. But an appropriate metaphor can be drawn from Masonry, which teaches members that their work aims to build a temple in spirit. Even the grandest temple of stone can be destroyed, but no material is as long-lasting as memory.

So while the stones memorializing the Masons buried at Lone Mountain have long since vanished or been eroded by time and tide, their story lives on in other ways. The loveliness of Aquatic Park, protected from the harsh San Francisco Bay by the breakwater, certainly suggests as much. At Lone Mountain, their memory lives on, hiding in plain sight to every person who passes the old site as they walk or drive along what's now known as Masonic Avenue. 🚸

Tony Gilbert is a writer and member of **Golden** Gate Speranza № 30, as well as a past board member of the South End Rowing Club. Ian A. Stewart is a writer and editor of California Freemason.



By Adrian Spinelli (the set

AGO. BUT AT THE MASONIC LODGE AT HOLLYWOOD FOREVER, THEIR PRESENCE CAN STILL BE FELT.

OLLYWOOD HAS ALWAYS had a flair for the dramatic. And in 1931, the town's newest Masonic lodge was no exception. Abutting the massive Paramount Studios movie lot, the lodge played host to a theatrical midnight funeral service, billed in the press as

an ultra-rare ceremony witnessed only a handful of times in history.

The Masons entered the upstairs lodge room for the service at the "low 12" hour, each holding a single candle. As they filed in, they flanked the coffin of the deceased, and a ritual prayer was read. Upon recitation of the last incantations, the Masons knelt and blew out their candles, and the room went dark. Silently, the pallbearers spirited the coffin through a secret door. When the lights came back up, the body had vanished.

Nearly a century later, the Masons are long gone, but the old lodge room still retains its magical allure. Situated within the old Hollywood Memorial Park Cemetery, the two-story building on Santa Monica Boulevard now hosts some of Tinseltown's most celebrated performers. In 2008, the site was rebranded as the Hollywood Forever Cemetery, with the Masonic Lodge acting as a venue for intimate concerts from renowned artists including Philip Glass, Moby, Karen O, and the National, among any others.

In short order, the Masonic Lodge has become a part of the fabric of Los Angeles' cultural life. In addition to the concert series, it hosts Cinespia's outdoor movie nights, which are projected against the exterior walls of the Churrigueresque lodge hall. Patrons sit under blankets beside headstones for some of the country's most famous performers and celebrities, from Rudolph Valentino to Judy Garland to Chris Cornell.

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All that gives the site one-of-a-kind ambiance. Jay Boileau, who has been Hollywood Forever's executive vice president and director of cultural events since it was purchased out of bankruptcy in 1997, says the Masonic lodge there is no typical venue. "The way the room is designed with those high beams, it feels huge. But it's actually a small room, so it feels intimate, too," he says. "As you walk in, the wheels are turning in your brain."

The history of the lodge is still apparent in its renovated state. Onstage, the lodge officers' chairs are conspicuous reminders of its past. In 2009, rocker St. Vincent played one of the venue's first-ever shows flanked by two of the ornate seats, with the Eastern Star light and intricate chandeliers suspended above her. Stained-glass windows full of Masonic emblems lent the room-and performance-a sanctified air.

When Boileau and his colleagues assumed control of the property, the lodge room had sat vacant for nearly 30 years and was being used mainly as a storage facility. It took them a year to clean out the

> countless cemetery documents, purchase records, and building models. At first they envisioned the space as a production studio for multimedia tributes of the deceased, but looking over the architectural models, an idea for a new use became clear.

> Originally, the lodge's presence was the work of one man. Frank Heron was a 32nd-degree member of the Scottish Rite, past commander of the Knights Templar's Los Angeles chapter, and, beginning in 1922, president of the Hollywood Cemetery Association. It was Heron who helped turn the property into a modern





memorial park and first made plans for a Masonic hall on its grounds.

In 1924, the Bankers Masonic Club of Los Angeles petitioned for a dispensation to form a new lodge. The following year, it was constituted as Southland № 618, with William Frederic Gallin as its first master and Heron as junior warden. At the time, Heron was exploring ways to build on the cemetery property, but city codes required any new construction on coveted Santa Monica Boulevard to be commercial.

Additionally, "He was under pressure to lease the space to an organization that was deemed appropriate to a cemetery," says Heather Goers, an architectural historian who has been compiling a cultural landscape report on the cemetery while it's under consideration to be named an L.A. historical monument. "People who had purchased lots in the cemetery didn't want, say, a bar on the property. So his idea was to lease the upstairs space in this commercial building project to Masonic lodges."

It was a perfect match, and Heron got the structure built almost immediately. Southland № 618 moved into the lodge room, which it shared for a time with Mt. Olive № 506, a group made up of movie studio men (including the producer Darryl F. Zanuck of The King and I). Heron served as the building manager until 1939, when Jules Roth took over. Roth managed the space until its sale in the 1990s. Southland № 618 decamped in 1967, and in 1979 consolidated into Southland Heritage № 618. In 1990, it consolidated again into the current Magnolia Park № 618.



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And while the Masonic connection exists today in name only, the lodge's history lends the site an atmosphere that's hard to replicate. Says Boileau, "It really opens people up emotionally for an incredible artistic experience in a way other venues can't." 🚸

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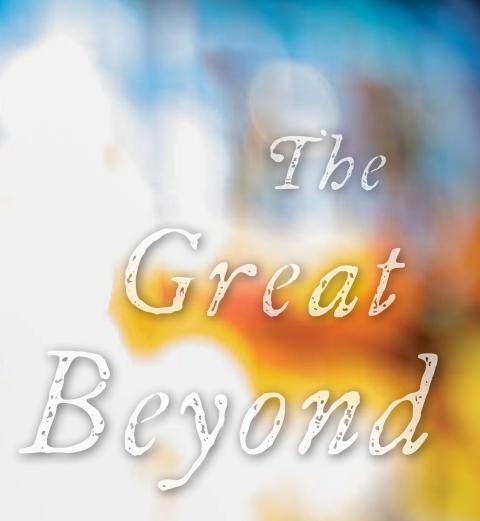
Above: The original Eastern Star room inside the Masonic Lodge at what is now called the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

Left: An exterior shot of the lodge hall at the former Hollywood Memorial Park Cemetery

Opposite: The lodge room has been transformed into an intimate concert space for the likes of Glass Animals, seen here in 2014.

An expert on near-death experiences, PTSD, and grief, Steve McLaughlin now helps those confronting the end at the Masonic Center for Youth and Families.

> PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN KLIMEK



An MCYAF clinical psychologist believes near-death experiences have much to teach us about life—and whatever comes next.

IME STALLS OR IT SPEEDS UP. Your thoughts race. Bodiless voices whisper. All at once, you know the answer to every question you've ever had about yourself, your life, the universe. You become aware that you're part of a larger whole. Peace shrouds you like a comfortable blanket. A bright light dazzles you; a tunnel or door beckons. You see yourself from outside your body, watch a surgeon carefully operate on your heart or a first responder work to pull you from a crushed car. You become aware that something exists beyond the reach of your senses—perhaps you even see a being, feel a presence. ¶ These are some of the hallmarks of a near-death experience. We don't know exactly why or how they occur, although typically they happen

BY LINDSEY J. SMITH



in the throes of severe, life-threatening trauma. Studies estimate that a many as 8 percent of people have had a near-death experience; that figure jumps as high as 23 percent for cardiac arrest survivors.

Even if we don't yet understand the why or how of these encounters, Steve McLaughlin believes neardeath experiences have a lot to teach us.

McLaughlin, a clinical psychologist with the Masonic Center for Youth and Families based at the Masonic Homes campus in Union City, has been

"The things they describe are much more involved and elaborate and real compared to the state of their body."

fascinated by the phenomenon for decades. It's an interest that he traces back to his time as a student at the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, where he obtained his doctoral degree in clinical psychol-

ogy and his master's in divinity. He was particularly captivated by stories of people who'd had out-of-body experiences during a near-death episode and recalled seeing themselves or their surroundings from an exterior point of view. "From the outside, they're not very responsive at all," McLaughlin says. "And yet the things they describe are much more involved and elaborate and real compared to the state of their body. You listen to them and your jaw kind of drops."

For his dissertation, McLaughlin investigated the connection between near-death experiences and spirituality. He interviewed 40 people who'd had a close brush with death and found that the more traumatic the episode, the more likely that religion became important to them afterward. He also found that survivors were more likely to become active in their faith.

"In talking to these people, I came away with a sense that there's more out there than just the physical world I live in," he says. As a practicing Christian, McLaughlin already believed in an afterlife beyond the physical realm. But what he learned through his research underscored "that there's something going on there that's more than just everyday reality," he says. "It seems pretty real, pretty significant."

Scientific interest in near-death experiences has grown exponentially over the past four decades. In 1983, the year before McLaughlin finished his dissertation, just 10 scientific papers on the topic had been published; there are now several hundred, according to a 2020 study in the journal Consciousness and Cognition.

The link between faith-or at least spiritualityand near-death experiences still intrigues McLaughlin. It has also provided him with comfort as a person who has experienced loss. While McLaughlin was conducting his dissertation research, his mother died of a cerebral hemorrhage at just 57. What he heard from people who'd had near-death experiences gave him, in his words, "a sense of connection with something beyond our five senses."

That's a sentiment McLaughlin incorporates into his professional work as a clinical psychologist, where he specializes in treating those dealing with PTSD and grief. Prior to coming to MCYAF, McLaughlin spent 10 years working in the state prison system. At the Masonic Homes, McLaughlin interacts primarily with the very elderly—people who are close to death and often have experienced the loss of a loved one. According to McLaughlin, the elderly have a different perspective on mortality than younger people do. "When you're younger, you sort of block death out. You don't think about it much-you're living your life," he says. "As you get older, it becomes harder to block out."

When working with grieving people, "there are certain emotions and feelings and issues that tend to come up pretty regularly," McLaughlin says. He strives to make therapy a safe environment for working through whatever arises, be it denial, anger, guilt, loss, or sadness. "Ideally, you're trying to help the person come to some acceptance, or come to terms with what's happened."

It isn't always easy, but the key is to "be a support to that person, allowing them sadness and loss, anger and frustration," he says. "Grief is a process, and if they feel like you care about them and you're there with them, that's the best you can do."

As much as the pandemic "feels like a big burden" to many of us, McLaughlin says, it can teach us things about grief and mourning. "Both require a certain kind of resilience. We didn't choose the pandemic. You don't choose grief, either. It's generally kind of thrust upon you." Being close to death, whether through a near-death experience, witnessing a loved one pass away, or approaching the end of one's own life, gives people the opportunity to "broaden their perspective on life," he says. "They can step back from everyday life and find it to be a little more meaningful."

When they do, many people take a personal inventory and find clarity about what matters most to them, McLaughlin says. One thing usually rises to the top: "People come away from these experiences valuing their relationships with other people. That's what really matters."

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The Lifeline THANKS TO LODGE VOLUNTEERS, MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES CAN BE HERE, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE. BY LAURA BENYS

As a SOCIAL WORKER and hospice expert, Robert Sachs knew that the right support at the right time can transform someone's life. And from serving as master of King David's Lodge № 209 in San Luis Obispo, he knew that Masonic Outreach Services offered that kind of help.

But it wasn't until he became a funeral master for the fraternity and started meeting with widows of deceased members that he discovered how few people understood the range of services the fraternity could actually offer them. Nearly every time he approached a widow to ask if they needed help connecting to Masonic Outreach Services, they'd tell him they hadn't heard of it. "It shocked me," he says. The lack of awareness was widespread.

ILLUSTRATION BY NOAH

MACMILLAN

"You're told that the Masonic Outreach Services number is on the back of your dues card," Sachs

says. "But in terms of what's actually possible through it-the counseling services, even financial help-it wasn't really known."

Sachs was determined to change that, at least in his corner of the state. So he got involved in the fraternity's lodge outreach program, which trains volunteers from Masonic lodges in each division to get in contact with elderly or needy Masons, their families, and their widows, and to explain the services available to them. Now, at quarterly meetings, he and other volunteers talk about their toughest outreach challenges and how to lean on one another to solve them. They learn about the services that MOS offers to fraternal family members-benefits just waiting to be tapped into.

While most Masons are familiar with the Masonic Homes senior housing campuses in Union City and Covina, it's actually through



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- Transitions short-term care for neurological and post-surgical rehabilitation (Union City)
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- Shared housing for seniors in Covina

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VOLUNTEERS FROM CONSUELO NO. 325 HELP A FELLOW MEMBER MOVE, AN EVENT ORGANIZED THROUGH MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES.

Masonic Outreach Services-a division of the Masonic Homes organization-that the vast majority of Masonic assistance reaches those in need. MOS provides guidance, care management, and in some cases financial support to Masons, widows, and eligible family members no matter where they live, even outside California. It's helped hundreds of elderly people age at home safely and with dignity by connecting them with in-home care. It's helped others navigate health crises, job losses, and major challenges regardless of age. "MOS was created so our members and their loved ones don't have to face tough times alone," says Sabrina Montes, executive director. "Aging at home, financial insecurity-these problems can be really hard to solve by yourself. But you don't have to."

Since launching in the early 2000s, the program has quietly become the fraternity's dominant source of Masonic relief. In 2021, it served 492 people through \$3.5 million in support, up 20 percent from five years ago.

It's all thanks to two things: funding through members' dues and donations, and volunteers through the lodge outreach program.

Masonic Outreach Services' nine care managers are trained in social work, so they know how to track down community resources to help with the cost of housing, food, and transportation. They can also provide hands-on case management and financial relief. And by partnering with outreach volunteers, they can help fraternal family anywhere in the state

"MOS was created so our members and their loved ones don't have to face tough times alone."

or even the country. Volunteers like Sachs do the day-to-day work of outreach, such as driving clients to doctors' appointments, helping with household chores, and providing simple companionship.

At other times, outreach volunteers make a difference by encouraging members to simply pick up the phone.

That's what happened with one particular member of Sachs's lodge. The member had endured a series of health crises and financial challenges, and he was struggling to pay rent and afford his medication. Sachs urged him to call MOS. Months later, he saw the man at a lodge dinner. "He comes up to me and says, 'Making that call changed everything for me,'" Sachs recalls. "'I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't made the suggestion."

Slowly but surely, as Sachs has clued more members in to the work of Masonic Outreach Services, that kind of exchange is becoming more common. It's the shift he's been working toward. "Now there's a lot more awareness in the lodge," Sachs says. "When something comes up, you'll suddenly hear a brother say, 'Have you ever thought of MOS?'" &

For support and information about Masonic Outreach Services, call (888) 466-3642.

To volunteer with the Lodge Outreach Program, call (888) 466-3642 or email lodgeoutreach@mhcuc.org

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ONOR PROFILE

Antonio Cimarra

CALIFORNIA № 1, SAN LEANDRO № 113 26-YEAR MASON

AIRLINE MAINTENENCE MANAGER AND CORNERSTONE SOCIETY MEMBER

California Freemason: What inspires you to give back through the California Masonic Foundation? Antonio Cimarra: Growing up in Manila, giving back to the community has always been an important value in my family. During typhoon disasters, my parents were always there to volunteer and help with our local church. At Christmas, my mother would cook meals for the less fortunate and serve them out of our garage. We weren't rich, but we were blessed to have enough for ourselves and have the opportunity to give back. Seeing my parents do stuff like that really made an impact on me. I moved to California in 1979 and if one thing's for sure, it's that we have so much in America—so much food and clothes. It makes you wonder, Do I really need all these possessions? Will these clothes benefit someone back home more? **CFM:** As a Cornerstone Society member, you've left a gift for Masonic charities in your will. Why did you decide to do that?

AC: I'm always looking for new and unique ways to give. I want to encourage the younger generation-

TO DONATE

Please visit masonic foundation.org especially my own kids—to learn about the importance of charity and generosity. I want them to realize how fortunate they are. You can create a great legacy if you take the time to volunteer or give to charity. I knew the Cornerstone Society would be a

great way to give back to the organization that has given so much to me in return.

CFM: What do you enjoy most about your lodge? AC: Thanks to Masonry, I've found true friendships within my lodge. I can talk to them about anything, not just about Masonry. Especially during my lowest points, they were always there for me. They would stop by my house just to see how I'm doing and even drop some food off. In laughter or in sadness, everyone there makes you feel right at home. 🚸 —JUSTIN JAPITANA

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For many, Freemasonry offers a pathway to spiritual growth—acting as a "handmaiden to religion," as it has been described. At this year's California Masonic Symposium, a group of experts on Freemasonry debate the role of spirituality within the craft—and the ways in which Masonry has influenced and been influenced by other spiritual and esoteric movements. Join us June 16 for this very special Masonic education event.

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Freemasonry in Latin America Now

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CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

IN EVERY ISSUE

SNAPSHOT 2 The International Order of the Rainbow for Girls celebrates its 100th anniversary.

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a can't-miss wine country lodge lives up to its historic reputation [PAGE 10]; what's up with all the secret societies on TV right now? [PAGE 11]; a Latin folk musician goes deep on his craft-inspired lyrics [PAGE 12].

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SNAPSHOT

2022 GRAND WORTHY ADVISOR KATIE SULLIVAN MAKES AN ENTRANCE AT THE GRAND ASSEMBLY. LOOKING ON, FROM LEFT, ARE CRISTINA MORALES, TRIANNA DINGMAN, ANGELINA ROBLES, ABIGAIL FRYE, SAMI MAPLES, KARINA MURUGESU, JORDAN MURPHY, JEANINE REYES, KAMRYN MONTEGNA, HOPE RODRIGUEZ, AINSLEY KAY, AND MEGAN LARSON.

0



IT WAS A PARTY 100 YEARS in the making. This April in Fresno, members of the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls in California gathered to hold their Grand Assembly and celebrate the organization's 100th anniversary. Living up to their name, it was a colorful affair: Katie Sullivan, the 2022 Grand Worthy Advisor in California, made her entrance on a floral-covered Beetle driven by Dana Regier, the state supreme inspector, as other grand officers cheered her on. "Our pillars are leadership, sisterhood, and service, and that will never change," says Dejah Urbanovitch, the director of leadership for an assembly in the San Fernando Valley. "There are some things that are just timeless." For more about the Rainbow Girls' centennial, see page 9.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK READ

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

CROSSING BORDERS

Let's use Freemasonry to build a world in harmony.



IN THIS ISSUE of California Freemason, we're exploring Masonry in Latin America. This has a very special meaning for me. When I served in the U.S. Army in the Republic of Panama, I belonged to **Gatun Lodge**, in the District Grand Lodge of the Panama Canal. While I was stationed there, I met and become friends with many Panamanian Masons, including the members of **Logia Luz y Progresso Nº 63**, under the Grand Lodge of Panama. The ritual worked in that lodge was the

same as ours, but in Spanish. Meaning that, even with the limited Spanish I spoke, I was able to follow along relatively easily.

What transcended language, however, was the shared experience of performing the ritual together. That's an experience I want to encourage for our members. We have an opportunity to reach out to communities that have been historically underrepresented in our organization and share with them all that makes Masonry great. In doing so, I see us advancing our vision of a world in harmony.

We already know how Freemasonry can meaningfully improve people's lives. I see that at the Masonic Center for Youth and Families. Counselors there recently partnered with the Pomona Unified School District to provide mental health services to children and teens who have suffered extreme trauma and separation from their families during their journey from countries in Latin America to the United States. It's a fine example of providing relief to those truly in need, and one I'm incredibly proud of.

I wish you all the joys of the summer season and good health. May the Supreme Architect of the Universe watch over you, your families, and our beloved craft.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Jeffery M. Wilkins Grand Master of Masons in California

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H O E S

A

Covering California Freemasonry AFFINITIES

The Lodge on the Playa

FOR MASONS AT BURNING MAN, THE EVENT HAS A SPIRITUAL COUSIN IN FREEMASONRY.

THIS AUGUST, A SERIES of extraordinary events will unfold on a dusty expanse of desert in northwestern Nevada. In a matter of weeks, a town the size of Eureka, California, will be built from scratch, complete with its own power grid, temple, and ranger force. Its population will shoot from zero to 80,000-bigger than the city of Mountain View. And before it's all torn back down again, the citizens of this overnight oasis will watch and cheer as a 75-foot wooden sculpture of a man is burned in effigy. ¶ Burning Man is a spectacle in every sense. From its origins as an artists' bacchanal on a San Francisco beach to today's enormously complex festival, it has had a profound impact on many. ¶ Revelers in various states of elaborate dress-or undress, as the case



may be-converge on the playa each year to make, share, and explore impromptu art installations and generally expand their minds. Scorched by the sun and covered in dust, "burners" treat the event as a pilgrimage of sorts, an opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment far beyond their everyday lives.

And for the small group of California Masons who make the annual trek to Black Rock Desert, the echoes between Burning Man and Freemasonry are unmistakable.

"People who attend Burning Man or are involved in something like Masonry are trying to better themselves or learn something at a higher level," says Kevin Jones, a member of Logos Nº 861 in San Francisco and a self-professed

burner. "Some people just want to party, but most are there for a much bigger purpose." Participants in both scenes are, he adds, "misunderstood in some ways."

Once you get past Burning Man's countercultural trappings, the similarities to Freemasonry become apparent. Beyond the

THE ELABORATE TEMPLE IS EVENTUALLY **BURNED DOWN, ALONG WITH ALL THE** MEMENTOS PEOPLE LEAVE IN IT.



strange and mystical customs, both are about seeking out a higher meaning. For Nick Angelis, a member of Oceanside-San Dieguito Nº 381, the things that drew him to his first Burning Man in 2009 called him to join Masonry the following year. "I wouldn't be the person I am today if not for Burning Man and for Masonry," he says.

Both Burning Man and Masonry offer an opportunity to enter a new dimension. That's typified by the Masonic custom of referring to the lodge room as a "sublime" space and the world outside as "profane." Carson Duper, a member of **Pacific-Starr** King № 136 who was involved in Burning Man's early years, recalls stepping over a line drawn in the sand as he arrived onsite, and being instructed, "You're entering a sacred space now."

The commitment to living up to one's highest ideals is baked into the ethos of both Burning Man and Freemasonry. The ten principles of Burning Man, espoused by the event's original organizers, include things like radical inclusion, the idea that any and all are welcome to join. For the small band of Masonburners, such principles have direct parallels in Freemasonry. Then there's the empha-

sis on ritual. At Burning Man,

participants have developed all sorts of symbolic gestures. One of the most powerful involves placing mementos inside a wooden temple before it and the man are burned to the ground. When they're set aflame, the tokensand whatever they representdisappear forever. "It's about

"I wouldn't be the person that I am today if not for Burning Man and for Masonry."

discarding something from your life and getting rid of it from your psyche," Duper says.

Says Jones, "The catharsis of burning the man as a community every year is very deep and very spiritual."

That allusion to shared community is particularly important. More than the elaborate rituals and costumes, the clearest connection Duper sees between Burning Man and Freemasonry is their ability to form tight-knit groups of unlikely friends. "In a way, it's just an excuse for a community to gather itself around," he says.

As Burning Man returns for 2022 (following a gathering in the "multiverse" in 2020 and an unauthorized, renegade conclave last year), many Masonburners say they hope the old spirit of the event remains. And for those thinking of venturing into the desert for the first time, Angelis offers this: "Just like with Masonry, with Burning Man it's like a choose-your-ownadventure book. There's everything for everybody." No matter what, Angelis says, "You're going to have an eye-opening experience." 🔶

LUMINARIES

lier name for Treasure Island.

credit where it's due.

PREVIOUS PAGE

BLM. ABOVE

RIGHT : KEVIN



A Dream, Deferred

150 YEARS LATER. AN EFFORT TO RECOGNIZE A VISIONARY SAN FRANCISCO CHARACTER AND LEGENDARY FREEMASON.

IT WAS AN AUDACIOUS PLAN, coming from a suitably audacious source. The year was 1872. Joshua Norton, the beloved San Francisco eccentric, Freemason, and self-proclaimed Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico, had issued yet another of his frequent "proclamations" to be published in the local press. This time his dispatch outlined his vision for a massive new infrastructure scheme. "We, Norton I, Dei gratia Emperor ... order that the bridge be built from Oakland Point to Telegraph Hill, via Goat Island," he wrote, using the ear-

What he was describing is today called the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. One hundred and fifty years later, John Lumea is on a mission to give

Issued more than 60 years before the completion of the bridge, Norton's proclamation-one of hundreds he'd pen over 20 years-stands either as an amazing bit of foresight or the ravings of an unhinged dreamer. As is often the



EMPEROR

NORTON I, A BOM

FRANCISCO, ENVI

SIONED BOTH THE BAY BRIDGE AND

THE TRANSBAY

TUBE-DECADES

BEFORE EITHER

CAME TO PASS.

8

SUMMER 2022

BASTIC FIGURE OF EARLY SAN

case when it comes to Emperor Norton, the truth is entirely in the eye of the beholder.

Lumea knows where he stands on the matter. As head of the Emperor Norton Trust, he's on a yearslong mission to formally recognize the Emperor's legend by having Norton's name affixed

"In all these proclamations, he's talking about things like equality and tolerance and the common good."

to the bridge. Norton, a failed businessman turned oddball-about-town, was a cultural fixture in 1860s and '70s San Francisco who rubbed shoulders with artists and writers including Mark Twain and Frank Soulé, who along with Norton was a member of Occidental № 22. Today, he's celebrated as a sort of patron saint of the fraternal order E Clampus Vitus. "Even though Norton was known as this bombastic character, his concerns were always about the



people of San Francisco and figuring out how to help," Lumea says. "He was able to navigate that in a way that really endeared him to people."

This year, the sesquicentennial of Norton's three bridge proclamations, Lumea feels that the time has finally come to recognize him by adding his name to the bridge. It wouldn't be nearly as unusual as it sounds, he says: More than 30 bridges in California have ceremonial names-including the Bay Bridge, whose western span is named for former mayor Willie Brown.

For all of Norton's well-chronicled peculiaritieshe was often pictured in a military costume, epaulettes, and a beaver-fur hat-he was ahead of his time on matters of immigration, race, and urban development. (He also proposed a subway tube beneath the bay, 100 years before BART made it a reality.) For that reason, Lumea says, Norton stands as a sort of 19th-century forerunner to the city's famous countercultural tribes-the bohemians, beatniks, and hippies. "In all these proclamations,

he's talking about things like equality and tolerance and the common good," Lumea says. "These things became adopted as values of the Bay Area, and the Emperor is talking about them in the 1860s."

Whether or not that thinking was influenced by Freemasonry is an open question. Regardless, the fraternity was clearly an important part of his life. Norton joined Occidental № 22 (now **California № 1**) in 1854, and by 1855 was listed in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge as a Master Mason (suggesting he either progressed quickly through the degrees or affiliated after receiving them elsewhere). He remained connected to the lodge until being suspended in 1859, likely for nonpayment of dues. That's not surprising: Despite his immense popularity, following a disastrous business caper that left him bankrupt in 1854, Norton lived in a constant state of near-destitution.

Though he died without rejoining the lodge, it was a fellow Mason, Joseph Eastlund, later the head of Pacific Gas and Electric and a member of California № 1, who donated the funds to have Norton buried at the old San Francisco Masonic Cemetery. A century and a half later, his fellow members' embrace of Norton at both his heights and depths remains endearing, Lumea says. "It certainly says good things about the Masons." 🚸 —IAN A. STEWART



A Century of Change and Continuity

RAINBOW GIRLS TURNS 100, WITH A FOCUS ON THE FUTURE.

WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL Order of the Rainbow for Girls was founded in 1922, two years after women earned the right to vote, it aimed to build in its members a sense of "good citizenship and sound character."

Now, as the Masonic youth order celebrates its centennial, there's an opportunity to look back on all that's changed—and all that hasn't. Because with Rainbow, there remains a strong sense of tradition that leaders say is part of the appeal. "Our pillars are leadership, sisterhood, and service, and that will never change," says Dejah Urbanovitch, who joined in 1998 and now works with an assembly in the San Fernando Valley. "Some things are just timeless."

That feeling permeates the organization. Of course, it's most FACES OF THE RAINBOW Notable organizational



alumnae

Sandra Dav O'Connor, first female Supreme **Court Justice**

Dorothy Metcalf Lindenburger. NASA astronaut



Snowe, forme **U.S. Senator** (R-Maine)

visible in the dress code, which mandates floor-length or "tealength" dresses, depending on the context. Rather than stand out as anachronistic, these elements can be a draw, members say, particularly at a time when tradition has become an anomaly. However, the order's greatest value lies in the camaraderie and mentorship its members offer. Every two weeks, they get hands-on training in leadership competency. They create budgets and proposals for events, discuss how to better their communities, and learn strong public-speaking skills. Each year the grand worthy advisor (the highest-ranking youth member) chooses a statewide service project that members organize around all year long. Recent projects include fundraising for food

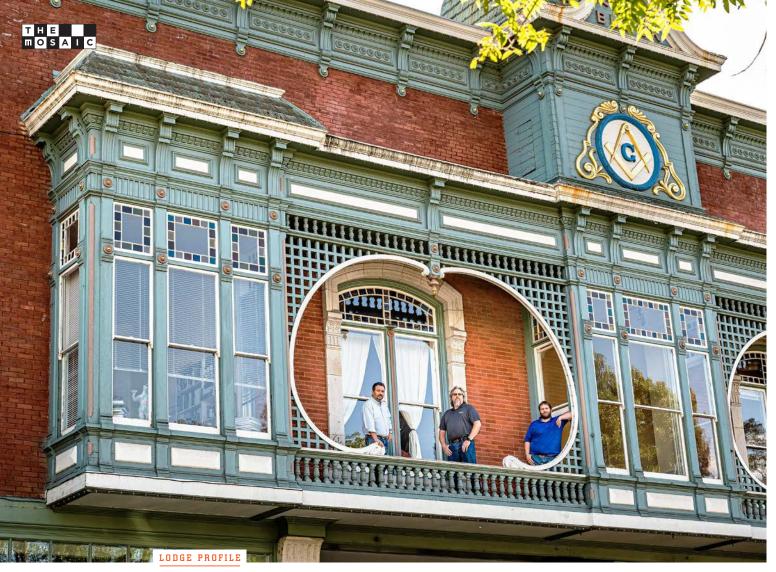
MEMBERS CELEBRATE AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HELD THIS SPRING IN FRESNO.

banks, helping families in need of housing, and raising money for cancer research and care.

Colleen Penaluna, who joined the Roseville assembly at 12 and served as grand worthy advisor in 2015-16, says those skills helped her land a job out of college. "Understanding that you have tangible experience makes you feel so much more confident when you go into that interview, ask for that raise, or start your own business," she says.

Today there are 53 assemblies active in California. As with many other service groups, that's a far cry from its peak in the 1970s. While Rainbow's leaders are acutely aware of the challenges facing organizations like theirs, they're adapting as best they can. Dana Regier, the supreme inspector of the California chapter of Rainbow Girls, points to how members use social media to promote events and stay in touch. There's also Beyond the Line, an online leadership-training program. So far it has an 85 percent participation rate. Among the skills it covers is image management, particularly relevant in the internet era. Both, Regier says, are examples of Rainbow adapting to the times.

That said, those close to the organization hit a familiar, and old-fashioned, refrain when discussing Rainbow's future: a sense of seeking, belonging, and finding purpose. "At the end of the day, they're all just girls trying to navigate the world to the best of their ability," Urbanovitch says. "That's never going to change." 🚸 —DREA ROMER



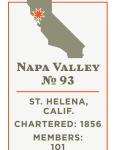
The Civic Center

AT NAPA VALLEY Nº 93, A LODGE USES ITS HISTORIC HOME TO PAY IT FORWARD.

LEGEND HAS IT, when in 1892 Captain Matthew Ritchie set his sights on constructing the grand new building in downtown St. Helena that would bear his name, he did so with an eye to the sky. Richie, a member of what was then called St. Helena № 93, had made his fortune in the Gold Rush, and intended to lease out his new building to serve as the lodge's meeting hall. He also wanted it to make an impres-

sion on the town. "The Odd Fellows had just constructed their hall across the street," explains past master Hector Marroquin. "The Masons wanted to make sure theirs was taller."

Richie succeeded on that front. And for the subsequent 130 years, the ornate Queen Anne building



(named the Richie Block) has remained the literal high point of this slice of Napa County. At four stories tall and about 16,000 square feet, the building is still the tallest in downtown. "It was about more than just pride," Marroquin says. "They wanted to make sure the lodge stood as the cornerstone of the community." That it has, and not just visually. Today,

members of **Napa Valley Nº 93**—the name

change reflects the consolidation of several wine country lodges in the 1990s—take pride in their group's civic zeal. Members continue to donate to local causes, including the St. Helena Unified School District, sports leagues, and the Boys and Girls Clubs, among others. They've also counted

MEMBERS OF NAPA VALLEY № 93 POSE ON THE FACADE OF THE IMPRESSIVE RICHIE BLOCK BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN ST. HELENA.

among their members an unusually large number of city and government officials.

So when in early 2020 the pandemic began to take its toll, the lodge decided to tap into its greatest asset—the Richie Block—as a way to help the town.

Ever since the lodge purchased the building in 1973, it has relied on income from office and commercial tenants. "At the onset of the pandemic, we met to discuss how we could help without hurting ourselves too badly," says Mikal Litzza, the senior warden. The hall association, which manages the building, decided to offer tenants occupying three retail spaces on the ground level and seven offices on the second floor a lifeline: They remitted 90 percent of the monthly rent. By summer that number had shifted to 75 percent, and in 2021, it was 50 percent for the year. The adjustments proved auspicious, Litzza says. "When other business owners downtown saw what we were doing, they started to remit rent for their tenants, too."

All told, the move saved the building's tenants more than a quarter-million dollars, allowing them to retain a dozen employees who might otherwise have been laid off. "In the end, we decided we'd rather see our community come out of the pandemic strong than make money off them," Litzza says.

Despite the loss in revenue, the lodge hasn't shirked its other philanthropic obligations. "We always remind ourselves that we have to avoid getting complacent and remain relevant to our community," says Samuel Maffei, the lodge master. In 2020 and 2021, the lodge donated \$60,000 to charity, including scholarships for members of the Masonic youth orders, continued support of the Masonic Homes, and local public schools. When the local fire station had to stop hosting blood drives because of social-distancing restrictions, the lodge donated use of its spacious hall every other month.

Thanks to its stunning building, just about everyone in St. Helena knows about the local Masons. But, Maffei says, it's lodge members' actions that have made the greater impression. "Our worth isn't about brick and mortar," he says. "Ultimately, it's measured in the impact we have in our community." & -ANTONE PIERUCCI

MORE ONLINE!

CHECK OUT A SPECIAL VIDEO PROFILE OF THE LODGE AT CALIFORNIAFREEMASON.ORG/NAPA93

PHOTOGRAPH

WINTERMEYER

BY WINNI



Who's in Charge Around Here, Anyway?

SUDDENLY, REFERENCES TO SHADOWY, ALL-POWERFUL SOCIETIES SEEM TO ABOUND.

THE FORCES THAT SHAPE our world, from pandemics to Tik-Tok crazes, are unknowable indeed. Or are they?

If you've been watching TV or movies lately, you might be forgiven for thinking twice about that question. Because—call us crazy—but it sure seems like we're suddenly surrounded by references to secret societies steering world events. First, in late 2021, came *Dan Brown's The Lost Symbol*, Peacock's

streaming adaptation of the best-selling prequel to *The Da Vinci Code,* with its not-quite-accurate portrayal of Masonry, murder, and intrigue. (For more, see californiafreemason.org/lostsymbol.) Then, in May, *Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*—partly filmed inside Freemasons' Hall in London—introduced Marvel fans to a new superhero-run secret society that rules an alternate-reality

"So what's with all these allusions to the Illuminati?"

version of Earth. And now, Netflix's farcical comedy series, *The Pentaverate,* takes it a step further: Its benevolent secret society, complete with robes, masks, and elaborate initiation rituals, attempts to solve the world's biggest problems, from the Black Plague to global warming.

So what's with all these allusions to the Illuminati, the legendary (and legendarily misunderstood) quasi-Masonic order? Who knows. Perhaps in an era rife with conspiracy theories and online misinformation, there's something reassuringly old-fashioned about a group of elite overlords guiding affairs from behind closed doors. But as any Mason worth his salt knows, that's got nothing to do with us. & -IAS



Crafting His Message

AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO A MASONIC-INSPIRED **MUSICAL OFFERING.**

WHEN ALEJANDRO LABORDE first learned about Freemasonry, he was intrigued but skeptical. A lifelong spiritual seeker, he connected deeply to its humanist messages. But, he says, "I didn't do groups. I was more searching for my own path." Finally, a visit to **Panamericana № 513** (and later **Oasis № 854**) won him over. "I realized it's about finding God within yourself-knowing yourself, working on yourself," he says. The message resonated, and in the years since it has found its way into his songwriting-including his 2016 track "Te Iluminarás." Here, the Latin folk guitarist explains the meaning behind his lyrics. $\oint -IAS$

Te lluminarás

Alejandro Laborde and Auras¹

Soy un humilde obrero / pero uso sombrero si se presta la ocasión / Voy por el mundo entero / se usar el dinero y lo comparto con amor / A tí yo te amo y quiero / y con mucho esmero yo te canto mi canción

(1)

"I'm into a lot of

Being in a band

you're always

exchanging dif-

ferent energies

their own aura.

When you put

them together, you get these

different combi-

and energies."

nations of colors

and perspectives.

Each member has

metaphysical stuff.

Cuando a veces tropiezo solo me levanto / Sacudo los huesos y sigo mi canto / Viviendo el momento / Todo lo que tengo contigo mi cielo / La vida me sabe mejor

COURTESY OF ALEJANDRO LABORDE

De donde soy no existen fronteras / tienes tu vivienda y también tu / habitación / Hoy voy por esta carretera /

y paso a paso más me acerco a tu corazón. / Así yo te amo y quiero / y todo lo que tengo lo comparto con amor

Luna, luna, luna buscas la verdad / Entre las estrellas tú la encontrarás / Luna, luna, luna sigues sin cesar / Entre tantos soles te iluminarás / Te iluminarás

Te iluminarás / Te iluminarás / Te iluminarás

You Will Be Enlightened (English translation)

I am a humble worker / But I wear the hat² if the occasion arises / I go all over the world / I know how to use money and I share it with love ³ / I love you, and I want you / And with great care I sing you my song

When sometimes I stumble, I just get up / I shake the bones and continue my song / Living the moment / All I have with you my love / Life tastes better to me

Where I'm from, there are no borders ⁴ / You have your home and also your room / Today I'm going down this road / And step by step, I get closer to your heart / So, I love and I want you And everything I have I share with love

Moon, moon, moon, you seek the truth / Among the stars you will find it / Moon, moon, moon, you go on and on / Among so many suns, you will be enlightened ⁵ / You will be enlightened

You will be enlightened / You will be enlightened / You will be enlightened

(2)

"I say I'm a humble craftsman. but I wear the hat if necessary. As the senior warden. I have had the opportunity to sit in when the master is out."

3

"For the past 22 years, I've worked with adults with disabilities. You cannot take for granted your ability to walk or talk or understand people. I find that to be a part of brotherly love: to see that in other humans."

(4)

"I'm interested in spirituality, alchemy, the esoteric sides of religion. I started visiting the Self-Realization Fellowship of Paramahansa Yogananda. It has a lot of similarities to Freemasonry. At their temple, there's a plaza with the symbols of all different religions The message is it's OK to come from different backgrounds. It's about finding God within yourself."

(5)

"The song is about my journey through the degrees. We talk about light as knowledge or wisdom. It's not about religion. It's more universal than that. With my music. I try to speak to everyone And if it touches vou in some way. that's the goal-to inspire people to be more friendly, more peaceful."

Members of Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc Nº 15 in Tijuana—a sister lodge of La Jolla Nº 518—pose for an Instagram moment

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW REAMER In Mexico and California, a picture of two fraternities joined at the hip.

BY IAN A. STEWART



SAUL ALVARADO ALREADY HAD a good idea about what Freemasonry was capable of, even before he joined it. He'd seen the effect it had on his fatherin-law's life, how it helped him navigate sobriety. But when he read up on the fraternity, he began to learn more about its importance to Mexican history. Just as the founding fathers of the United States were Freemasons, so too were the heroes of the Mexican Revolution and the War of Independence. "It was like, wait a second, Mexico has Masons, too?" he recalls thinking. "That really gave me the nudge to learn more. It made me want to get more involved."

Alvarado isn't the only person who's felt that pull of kinship. Freemasonry has a long and distinguished history in Mexico, though it's one that for many in California-including many Mexican Americanslargely remains a mystery. Yet it's also an enormous opportunity for those who, like Alvarado, see in Freemasonry a way not only to make friends and improve themselves, but to forge connections across borders and deepen their understanding of their culture and history. "Learning about all these figures who were Masons, it opens you up in a different way," he says. "It opens another dimension of pride."

Mexican Masonry isn't just a quirk of history. It remains alive and well south of the border, as well as in enclaves throughout California, Texas, and the Southwest, as it has for more than a century. Increasingly, California Masons are looking for opportunities to highlight that tradition and support the growth of Latino participation more broadly. Says Alvarado, "We need to extend this. We need to open Masonry up to the Latino community and celebrate what Freemasonry has meant to our heritage."

LOOKING NORTH, LOOKING SOUTH

This July, a group of Mexican and American Masons will attempt to do just that. Representatives from the grand lodges of California, Baja California, and Baja del Sur will meet in San Diego for the yearly Conference of Three Californias, which has taken place every year since 1979.

The conference is an opportunity to share new developments and best practices, says Arturo Sevilla, the grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of Baja California. It's also a way to celebrate an important partnership that transcends borders. The highlight of the event is a degree presentation put on by the host lodge. For those in attendance, being able to sit together in that setting is a powerful reminder of the global bonds tying members together. "It's good to know how

Masonry operates outside our borders," Sevilla says. "It makes our Freemasonry more cosmopolitan."

As lodges begin to envision a post-pandemic future, the conference is also serving as a possible preview of the fraternity's next evolution in two countries. "Moving forward, as we're talking about ways to adapt to improve diversity and inclusion in California, I see this as an important step," says Arthur Salazar, who as junior grand warden is on track to become California's first Latino grand master. "We can build so much more when we welcome other cultures within our communities. I see this as a challenge and an opportunity."

And an important step in meeting that challenge is saluting the deep Masonic legacy found within those members' cultures. For Masons like Alvarado, that's a real point of pride.



A FABLED HISTORY

The story of Freemasonry in Mexico is practically inseparable from the country's political history. The craft first arrived there in the late 18th century through

Spanish military lodges. The first permanent Mexican lodge was formed in 1806, and within a few years several more had been established, made up primarily of the country's European-born ruling classes. It was in these lodges that much of the liberal Enlightenment views of the time were propagated throughout Mexico.

By the end of the War of Independence in the early 1820s, a growing network of Masonic lodges had been installed in Mexico. From the very beginning, however, Mexican Masonry was weighted with the political rivalries that would domi-



nate the country for the next hundred years. In lieu of traditional parties, Mexico's political battles played out in lodge rooms, with Scottish Rite lodges tending to represent the centralists (conservative, Catholic, aligned with Europe). Meanwhile, the liberal federalists gravitated toward lodges working under the York Rite or the Mexican National Rite (pro-democratic,

A statuette holding Masonic working tools breaks free of its chains at the Oaxaca Masonic Temple.



anticlerical, aligned with the United States). Each side's political hierarchy was essentially reproduced within the respective lodges. From Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz to Francisco Madero and Lázaro Cárdenas, nearly every president of Mexico for 100 years

"It's good to know how Masonry operates outside our borders. It makes our Freemasonry more cosmopolitan."

belonged to one of the dueling Masonic bodies. That connection became even more pronounced during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20, as lodges morphed into de facto organizing bodies dedicated to promoting the

new government's social reforms. In 1929, President Emilio Portes Gil, a future grand master of Mexico, declared that the "state and Freemasonry in Mexico had become the same thing."

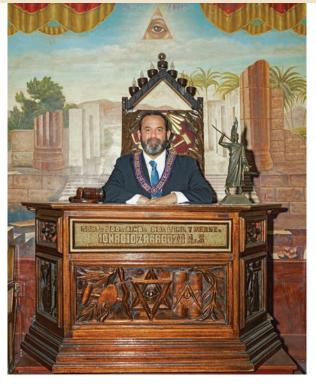
CHANGING TIMES

That's no longer the case. In the decades following the Mexican Revolution, Masonry began to recede from the public spotlight. Lodges became less involved with government affairs, and their influence in civic life waned. Unsurprisingly, the Masonic population in Mexico has also dwindled. In 1929, one estimate suggested a membership of about 10,000, out of a



TRAIPSING 2,500 MILES through the desert by rail in a threepiece suit might not be for everyone. But for the special delegation of California Masons dispatched to Mexico in 1890, it was the trip of a lifetime. The group toured lodges and attractions in Arizona, Texas, and down into Mexico, where it met with Gen. Porfirio Díaz, the Mexican president

To see more, visit californiafreemason. org/1890.



population of 17 million. Today that figure is nearly 20,000 (not counting irregular lodges, of which there are several) out of a population of 128 million-about a quarter of its relative size a century ago.

Masonic jurisdiction in Mexico is now divided amicably between 31 state-level grand lodges and a separate national grand lodge. Despite that patchwork of organizing bodies, Sevilla says, Freemasonry in Mexico today hardly resembles the factional hothouse it was for most of its history.

Still, Mexican Freemasonry retains a distinct flavor-one quite unlike what's practiced in the United States. The first and most obvious difference is the ritual. California (and most U.S.) lodges use the Preston-Webb ritual, which bears some similarity to the York Rite's craft degrees. While the York Rite still exists in Mexico, today the vast majority of lodges issue the first three degrees of the Scottish Rite. Also, Mexican Masonry places enormous emphasis on esotericism and philosophical study, says Andres Francisco Leon, a member of the Grand Lodge of Tamaulipas and past master of Cedros del Libano № 79 in Nuevo Laredo, just across the border from Texas. Candidates often spend years progressing through the degrees and are expected to produce written essays demonstrating their understanding of the ritual. Additionally, lodge rooms in Mexico tend to be more elaborately furnished than those in the United States. Most lodges also feature the signs of the zodiac painted onto brightly colored walls.

For all that grandeur, "Masonry in Mexico tends to be very solemn," says Daniel Velazquez, the grand

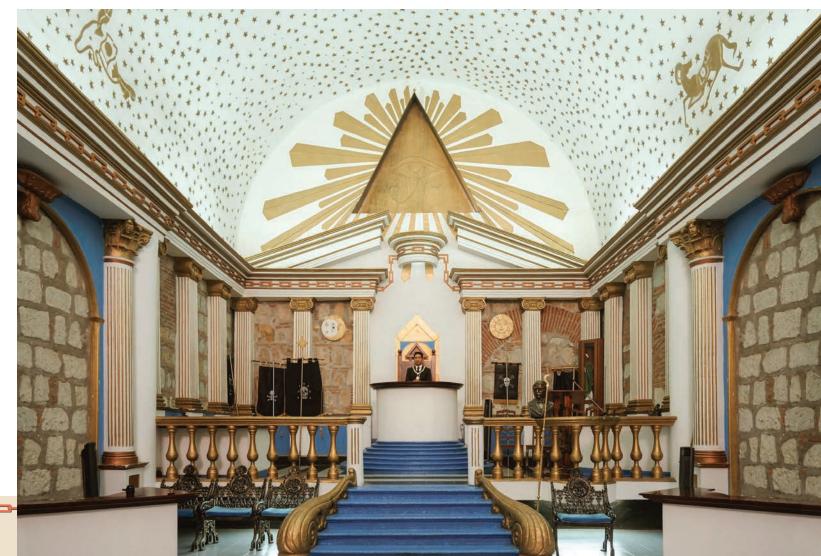
chancellor of the Gran Logia Occidental Mexicana in Jalisco and a member of Jacques DeMolay Nº 52 in Guadalajara. "Most lodges I've attended, they get mad if you cross your legs or take out your cell phone. It's a very serious place."

TWO COUNTRIES, ONE FRATERNITY?

For all the shared history across the border, for generations the fraternity in California was not especially welcoming to its southern neighbors. Until fairly recently, few Mexican American members were ever admitted into California's lodges.

While membership has never been formally closed to anyone on the basis of race, nationality, or ethnicity, Masonic lodges have historically reflected many of the same prejudices found elsewhere in society. Because lodges didn't keep records of members' ethnicity, it's impossible to track Latinos' historic share of overall membership. But during the early and middle part of the 20th century, it was sufficiently small that Leon Whitsell, in his study One Hundred Years of Freemasonry in California, pointed out that Golden Rule № 479 in San Jose was "one of the relatively few

lodges to have a native Hispanic Californian on its rolls. And it has not one, but two." That was in 1950. Though lacking visibility with the Grand Lodge of California, Mexican Masonry has long flourished in the state, particularly around Los Angeles, where for decades so-called "irregular" lodges have existed. These lodges have slightly different traditions and rules than do those organized under the Grand Lodge of California, and are not formally recognized by it. As such, members of the two bodies are not permitted to sit in on one another's meetings. For much of the 20th century, however, irregular lodges were the source of practically all Masonic activity among certain ethnic groups in California-particularly in Black, Latino, and Filipino communities.



(and Freemason).

In 1930, the Grand Lodge of California published a study in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of these ethnic lodges. That year, it identified 20 Mexican lodges organized under the Supremo Gran Oriente del Rito Nacional Mexicano. Another three groups were part of the Grand Lodge Benito Juarez of Torreon, which in 1932 appealed to the Grand Lodge of California for formal recognition. Later, a splinter group

Below: Grand Master Tomas Galguera inside the Oaxaca **Masonic Temple** of the Gran Logia **Benito Juárez** García, Opposi Grand Master of the State of Baja California Armando López Acosta presides inside Logia Simbólica Cuauh témoc Nº 15 in Tijuana



A Masonic lodge officer in Tijuana shows off his regalia.

of the Mexican National Rite established a series of lodges from San Pedro to San Francisco, while a women's lodge, or logia de adopción, was constituted in Los Angeles. (Women's and co-ed Masonry have a long history within the Mexican National Rite.)

Despite being short-lived, the irregular Mexican lodges represented a sizable group of Masons in California. In 1936, the Grand Lodge reported that one such group, Plaridel № 30 of Los Angeles, held "fraternal relations with no less than 750 foreign lodges."

Over time, more Mexican and Mexican American Masons began entering California blue lodges. So in 1946, a special committee recommended that the Grand Lodge of California establish its own Spanishspeaking lodges to serve the growing Mexican American Masonic community. "Our investigations of the personnel of some of these [irregular] groups lead us

to believe that many of their members are of good Masonic material," it reported. The motion, however, was not passed. It would be another decade before the next breakthrough.

THE MOTHER TONGUE

Eventually, that moment arrived. In 1959, Grand Master Phil Myers issued a dispensation to Maya Lodge № 793 in Los Angeles. Though the lodge would perform the ritual in English, it was envisioned as a haven for primarily Mexican American members. It wasn't until 1993 that it received special permission to perform its first degree ceremony in Spanish. (For more, see page 29.)

In 2005, a dispensation was issued for a second Spanish-speaking lodge, Panamericana № 849. (In 2008, it consolidated into Panamericana № 513.) A third Spanish-speaking lodge emerged in 2017, Fraternidad de los Americas Nº 867, though its charter was later revoked.

Through those lodges, Latinos have increasingly established themselves within California Masonry. In 2020, a survey determined that 23 percent of California members were of Latino descent. That figure includes Filipino members with Hispanic surnames, so the true membership descending from Latin American countries is likely lower. Either way, it's well short of the state's overall demographics, but also a far cry from the early days.

In addition to those members, California Masonry includes an estimated 35 irregular Mexicanstyle lodges, which serve an almost exclusively Latino membership. For many, there's a sense of hope that



OLIVER TORREALBA TORRES Maya Nº 793, Archimedes Nº 871 Francisco de Miranda Lodge, Venezuela

How did you first learn about Freemasonry in Venezuela?

My father was in the military, and the command he belonged to was stationed in the Villa Santa Ines, which was the home of Joaquín Crespo Torres, the former president of Venezuela and sovereign grand commander of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite in Venezuela. I grew up playing and running around there, and it taught me a lot about Freemasonry. I suspect that my father was a Mason too, but he never told me anything about it. Years later, I joined a military lodge in Caracas, before I came to the United States.

Is the connection between **Masonry and Venezuelan his**tory widely celebrated?

Cal

In Venezuela, like all Latin American countries, we celebrate our history with fervor. When you read about the revolution, our

leaders were all Masons. Many of our founding fathers, like Simón Bolívar, were Masons, and their speeches are full of Masonic words and ideals. José Antonio Páez, a hero of the revolution, was

grand master of Venezuela. Even our flag has Masonic elementsthe three colors, the seven fivepointed stars.

Is there something about Venezuela's culture that Masonry fits into very well?

For us as Latin Americans, Masonry is more than just a place for fraternity or for becoming better men. It represents a con-

nection to our history and to our family and THE INTERNATIONAL ancestors. Being a Mason CONNECTION is a way to set an example for your family to mbers holding dual Masonic follow. It means placing citizenshir a column of pride that can sustain your family

during adversity. Saying that my father or grandfather was a Mason is saying that they were a worthy example to follow. 🚸

the next chapter of Masonry in the state will include finding a way to incorporate those members. "We have a great opportunity to welcome them into the fold," one California member says. "They want and need the structure of the grand lodge, and they come with a wealth of knowledge. It would benefit us all."

Salazar has spent a lot of time thinking about that issue. Increasing the diversity in California's lodges, especially among Latinos, is key to strengthening the fraternity, he says. That hasn't always been easy. Salazar says even he was initially skeptical about approaching a lodge, since so few of its members looked like him. While much has changed since then, Salazar believes there's plenty of room to grow. "When I think about diversity, it's not about recruiting for the sake of a quota," he says. "We're talking about making sure every part of our community knows we bring something of value. If our Latino community hears that message, I think it will resonate."

THE NEXT CHAPTER

That's why Salazar is bullish on the Conference of Three Californias and other partnerships like it. An international connection is a powerful idea for many members, especially those with family on both sides of the border. More and more, it's a bond that members are experiencing. Examples of California and Mexican lodges supporting one another are increasingly common. Many Southern California lodges have even established sister-lodge programs with their Mexican counterparts. Among them are El Centro's Imperial Valley № 390 (with Palingensia № 46 of Mexicali) and La Jolla № 518 (with Logia Simbólica Cuauhtémoc № 15 in Tijuana). Others, including Downey United Nº 220 and La Mesa **№ 407,** have similar partnerships.

Says Salazar, "When I look at the larger picture of Freemasonry, it's wonderful to know you can travel to any country, any state, and be welcomed. It shows our lodges that there's nothing to be feared from inviting other cultures into our experience."

Velazquez has seen that up close in his travels throughout Mexico and the United States. It's left him with an ever deeper appreciation for Freemasonry. "When you go to a lodge in another country and see someone you haven't met before, he's going to call you a brother," Velazquez says. "It makes you feel like you're part of something that's very ancient and very big. So I feel like I have a responsibility to keep it going and to keep it great." 🚸

Five Times the Members, Half the Age

In Argentina, an explosion of Freemasonry.

LIKE THE REST of South America, Argentina's history of Freemasonry can be traced back to the country's independence movement in the mid-19th century. But in just the past decade, the country has seen a burst of Masonic activity: From only 2,200 members in 2008 to more than 10,000 today, representing 400 lodges that can be found in virtually every province. Grand Master Pablo Lázaro explains the sudden growth spurt. -IAS

YOUNGER MEMBERS, YOUNGER LEADERS

In 2008, the Grand Lodge of Argentina lowered the minimum age of membership to 18. At the same time, it made a sustained push to improve its visibility on social media. Crucially, the fraternity also worked to provide younger members with opportunities for leadership. The result is that the average age of members today is almost half what it was a little more than a decade ago. "Today we have young men of 22, 23 years occupying [lodge

officer] positions," Lázaro told La Nacion. "That is to say they are entering from the age of 18 and 19."

EMBRACE DEBATE

Argentinian Masonry places special emphasis on debate within the lodge. There, lodges tend to congregate around shared interests like political science, technology, or classical music. At lodge meetings, members pres-



Logia Masónica Hijos del Trabajo Nº 74 in Buenos Aires.

ent lectures delving into current events related to those topics. Masonic debating custom dictates that those in attendance may only speak in favor of the lecture; in the case of disagreement, a completely new paper must be prepared and presented in a subsequent meeting.

OPENING THE DOORS

To counter longstanding prejudices and accusations of secrecy, Argentinian lodges have made an effort to open themselves to the public. While the ritual and ceremonies remain private, the organization is increasingly inviting outsiders in, including inside the elaborate Grand Lodge building in Buenos Aires. The temple now participates in a citywide "Night of the Museums" through its Museo Masónico Hermano José de San Martín. >

In Latin America's revolutionary movements,

Masons were front and center. WHEREVER THERE'S REVOLUTION, there's almost always a Freemason leading the charge. That's certainly the case when it comes to Latin American history. Here's a rundown of a few of the most important. — Justin Japitana and Tony Gilbert

"A people that love freedom will in the end be free."

SIMÓN BOLÍVAR VENEZUELA A

Born in Caracas, in what is now Venezuela, Bolívar is the most important figure of the South American independence movement. He is responsible for liberating from Spain the nation of Gran Colombia-what would become Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama-and later Peru and Bolivia, which is named for him. Bolívar was initiated into Masonry in Cadiz, Spain, in 1803, and raised in 1806 at Mother of St. Alexander of Scotland Lodge in Paris. In April 1824, Bolívar received the 33° of honorary inspector general in the Scottish Rite. He founded and served as master of Protectora de las Vertudes Lodge **№** 1 in Venezuela, and founded the **Order and Liberty Lodge №** 2 in Peru in 1824.

Liberty is the right of every man to be honest, to think and to speak without hypocrisy."

 $\mathcal{J}_{\mathcal{L}}$

JOSÉ MARTÍ CUBA 🔺

The national hero of Cuba, Martí was a poet, journalist, and philosopher who advocated for the abolition of slavery. He is still widely seen as the father of Cuban independence. Martí's Masonic credentials are somewhat murky, but evidence suggests he was raised as a Master Mason in Armonía Lodge **№** 52 in Madrid in the early 1870s.

JOSÉ BONIFÁCIO BRAZIL

Known to Brazilians as the Patriarch of Independence, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva was a statesman who played a key role in securing Brazil's independence from Portugal. He supported public education, was an abolitionist, and helped found Brasília, the national capital, in Brazil's underdeveloped interior. Bonifácio also served as grand master of the Grande Oriente do Brasil in 1822 and helped unite the country's many politically oriented Masonic organizations.

"Men are nothing. Principles are everything.

BENITO JUÁREZ MEXICO

A liberal politician, a lawyer, and one of the most famous figures in Mexican history, Juárez was Mexico's first indigenous president and led the restored republic following the French invasion of the country. Juárez was initiated into Masonry in 1847 in La Logia Independencia **№** 2 of the Mexican National Rite (which now bears his name). In 1854 he received the 9°, and in 1862 he received the 33°. Every January 15, a ceremony is held to celebrate his legacy by the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Mexico.

BERNARDO O'HIGGINS CHILE

Born in Chile of Spanish and Irish descent, O'Higgins helped lead the Chilean War of Independence. In 1817, he became the supreme director of Chile and in 1823 helped liberate Peru alongside Simón Bolívar. O'Higgins was strongly influenced in the 1790s by the influential Great American Reunion Lodge of London, established by the Venezuelan revolutionary figure Francisco de Miranda, which was dedicated to an independent Latin America.

> 'In overthrowing me, you have only cut down the trunk of the tree of Negro liberty. Its roots will sprout again."

20 SUMMER 2022

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LUIS PINTO

MIGUEL HIDALGO MEXICO V

The "Father of Mexico" and a hero of the Mexican War of Independence, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla was a Catholic priest-turned-resistance leader. He is best remembered for his 1810 speech "Grito de Dolores," or "Cry of Dolores," which called for the end of Spanish colonial rule in Mexico. In 1806, Hidalgo, who was influenced by liberal ideas from the United States and Europe, was initiated into the first regular Masonic lodge in Mexico, named Logía Architectura Moral.

"We shall vet see the oppressors' voke broken and the fragments scattered to the ground."

POSURE

TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE HAITI

Haiti provides the only example in history of a population of enslaved people who rose up to become an independent, self-governing nation. They were led by the freedom fighter Toussaint L'Ouverture, who ended slavery there decades earlier than did any other country in the Americas. L'Ouverture was born into the complex racial caste system of the French colony of Saint Domingue. After buying his freedom, he began training troops when revolution broke out. His trusted inner circle were Masons, and according to historians, so too was L'Ouverture, evidenced by his signature, which featured three dots in a triangle. \diamond

Masonic lodges and monuments in Cuba are easy to spot.

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SUP

DE

LOCIA AURORA DEL BIEN Nº «10551»

THE FIRST THING YOU SHOULD KNOW is that Freemasonry is a big deal in Cuba.

I was on a bus when I first began to notice it, somewhere on the road between Aguada de Pasajeros and Santa Clara. It was a hot, dusty day, and as the antique vehicle chugged along, I gazed out the window, watching a rolling landscape of yellowed grass and palm groves, unfinished buildings and the occasional flag-flying monument to the revolution. We passed through a village, its wide streets lined in the usual mélange of Soviet-era concrete and colorful, crumbling Span<mark>ish Col</mark>onial architecture. Suddenly, my eyes landed on one building that stood out from the rest, a burst of turquoise, red, and gold—more elaborate than anything else on the street. As the bus rattled past, I noticed the emblem carved in bold strokes above the front door: a square and compass, framed by a glorious golden starburst.

The sign immediately distinguished this as a Masonic lodge. Usually such places do little to announce their presence. In Western Europe, Masonic lodges tend to be more conservative affairs. They are grand buildings, very often, but discreet enough that their function doesn't become apparent until you can make out their symbols and plaques. This Cuban lodge, on the other hand, was the most garish, colorful thing in town.

It was at that point I remembered I was traveling through a Communist state, and my brain did a



somersault. Because as far as I knew, Freemasonry had been outlawed by virtually every Communist party of the 20th century. For example: The Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia was "put to sleep" from 1940 to 1990. In Bulgaria, Freemasonry was banned by the 1940 Law for the Defense of the Nation, and subsequently active and even past Freemasons were frequently accused of being agents of foreign intelligence services.

Freemasonry was outlawed in the Soviet Union, too, and while some of the leading Communist revolutionaries had been members of Masonic lodges, they denounced the craft after seizing power in Russia. The general consensus seemed to be that such a system was incompatible with the new mode of Marxist society. As I looked out the window of that humid, rattling bus, however, it seemed as though Cuba disagreed.

That roadside carnival of a lodge was no aberrancy, either, as I'd discover during the rest of my stay in Cuba. Now that my eyes were open, I began noticing them everywhere—collecting them, even. I spotted the Logia Luz del Sur and Logia Aurora del Bien in Trinidad, on the south coast of Cuba; Logia José Jacinto Milanés Nº 21 in Matanza; Logia Hermanos de la Guardia in Cifuentes; and Logia Asilo **de la Virtud** (the "asylum of virtue") in Cienfuegos.

They dominated town squares; they burst in colorful formations of pillars and plaster façades from

otherwise plain village streets. Far from outlawing Freemasonry, Cuba appeared to be celebrating it. So I decided to do some digging and find out why.

LUZ DEL SUR: A BRIEF HISTORY **OF FREEMASONRY IN CUBA**

The fact is that Cuba is home to a flourishing Masonic community. In 2010, it was reported that the island had more than 300 Masonic lodges and more than 29,000 active members. The fraternity first appeared there

> in 1763 and grew as French Masons fled the Haitian Revolution of 1791.

The first part of this story is nothing peculiar. The former colonies of the Caribbean have long been a hotbed of Masonry. But the Grand Lodge of Cuba is

remarkable in that it thrived under a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship. One of the popular (if unverified) theories for that is that Fidel Castro may have been a Mason.

When the revolutionaries landed on Cuba in 1956—the Castro brothers, Che Guevara, and the rest, all 82 of them squeezed onto a 12-berth yacht named Granma-the island was under the tyrannical rule of Fulgencio Batista. The story goes that Castro and his brother were hidden from Batista's forces by a small Masonic lodge in the Sierra Maestra. It was from this remote lodge that Castro laid the foundation for his 26th of July Movement, which in 1959 would ultimately lead to the socialist revolution in Cuba.

Some say Castro himself was initiated as a Mason during that time. Others suggest that it was only Raúl Castro who joined, or some of the revolutionary fighters. Either way, the kindness and support allegedly given to Castro during those years by a remote Masonic community offered a popular theory for the tolerance Castro's regime would later show toward Cuban Freemasonry.

It's certainly a good story, although the truth might be simpler; after all, Cuba already owed a great debt to its Freemasons. During the island's struggle for independence from Spain, many of Cuba's leading revolutionaries were proud Masons, including Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Antonia Maceo, and the famous poet, journalist, and philosopher José Martí. It would have been exceedingly difficult for the regime to separate the memory of Cuba's national heroes from the ideas they had openly celebrated.

"Afro-Cuban faith and Freemasonry ... both played a role in consensus-building after the revolution," writes the folklorist E. C. Ballard. "The first was useful to gain support from the largely Afro-Cuban population of the island who remain poorly represented in the government. The second ensured the sympathy of the Latin American left."

As a result, Freemasonry in Cuba remained legal, though it was monitored by the Office of Religious Affairs. Membership numbers rose after the fall of the Soviet Union and Castro's government eased restrictions on the craft, allowing the opening of new lodges and even permitting Masons to participate in public ceremonies dressed in full regalia.

Some elements of Cuban Masonry are notable for their differences. In general, for instance, Masons' dress code in Cuba tends to be fairly relaxed, and

THE



"Afro-Cuban faith

and Freemasonry...

both played a role in

consensus-building

after the revolution.

EDGUIN CASTELLANOS Panamericana Nº 513 King David Nº 5 (Belize)

I understand that the lodge vou first joined in Belize has an interesting history.

Yes, many lodges in Belize were "quasi-Masonic." My lodge, Star of King David Nº 5, belonged to the Independent United Order of Scottish Mechanics. The degrees are very similar to Masonry, except the symbols are related to mechanics, not stonemasons. We wore the apron and had all the same signs, and most of the rituals were the same. It was popular in the Caribbean and former English colonies, but these days it's a

dving organization. So INTERNATIONAL with some friends from CONNECTION Mexico, which is 20 minutes north, we regularized the lodge to Freemasonry. I was part of that change.

What was the biggest change for you when you first experienced **California Masonry?**

In Belize, we worked in English, so when I came here and joined Panamericana Nº 513, I had to learn the ritual in Spanish, which was challenging. I knew a bit of Spanish, but more like what we'd

call "kitchen Spanish"just enough to get by. It's also a different ritual. It's similar, of course, but in terms of execution, it's a com-

pletely different ball game.

Besides the ritual, is the lodge experience much different?

In Latin American Freemasonry, there's a huge emphasis on esoteric work. Here, it's more philanthropic. In our countries, we invest lots of time in everything spiritual and esoteric. That's a huge draw there. 🚸



The towering Grand Lodge of Cuba dominates the Avenida Salvador Allende in Cuba.

women are sometimes admitted to lodges. Ballard speculates that such adaptations are "welcomed generally in a society which formally eschews bias and discrimination of any kind."

Today, more than a third of Cuba's Freemasons are based in Havana, where the impressive Grand Lodge building dominates an entire city block, daubed in esoteric symbols. This is the nucleus of Cuban Freemasonry, the nerve center from which all 316 Cuban lodges are regulated; and after my week of road-tripping through the cities of the south, I was eager to pay it a visit.

EL GRAN LOGIA DE CUBA

Back in Havana, I spent a morning wandering the city's main cemetery, Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón. Containing row upon row of polished marble, the necropolis was founded in 1876 by the Spanish. As I traversed the endless parade of bleached-white stone, I found a mass of esoteric epitaphs among the grave markers. Lodges gathered their dead together, wrought-iron fences separating the deceased into memorial plots according to Masonic custom. The

symbols of the craft were easy to spot.

In the afternoon, I set out for the Grand Lodge of Cuba at 508 Avenida Salvador Allende, a towering 11-story structure that, before the appearance of a new wave of tourist hotels in the capital, was the second-tallest building on the island. (The avenue itself was named after the 30th president of Chilea Marxist, Freemason, and good friend of Castro's.)

OUTHERN EXPOSURE

I spotted the Gran Logia almost the moment I turned onto the avenue. I had cut through backstreets on my way there, under washing lines and spiderwebbed telephone cables, where children played baseball in the street. And then, suddenly, there it was. Pontiacs and Corvettes puttered up and down the avenue, while at the far end, rising clear of the colonial blocks and arches, a yellow titan broke the horizon. It was every bit as subtle as the village lodges I'd seen, 11 floors of budget Art Deco capped off with a globe, a square, and a compass.

Established in 1955, Havana's Masonic headquarters contain the office of the grand secretary, a museum, a home for elderly Masons, and an extensive library (though, according to rumor, the Cuban government has since commandeered most of the floors for its own use). I got close-close enough to admire the zodiac clock set into the building's facade-but despite my best efforts, I couldn't get inside.

A gentleman in suit and glasses stood between the doors and greeted me with a quizzical smile. I'd been told the library was open to layfolk. I gestured past him, toward the interior of the building, and said "¿Por favor?" while flashing the best smile I could manage. I was answered with a motion of genteel refusal.

Not wanting an argument, I stepped away, only to run into a man who'd been watching the entire affair. The man was 60 perhaps, with a sun-weathered face and the wiry body of a farmworker. I'd noticed him as I arrived in the park, raking leaves while puffing on a cigar. "Hector," he said with a mischievous smile, and shook my hand.

We exchanged pleasantries, and then I decided to swing for the fences. Was Fidel Castro a Freemason? I asked him. He laughed.

"Perhaps," he said, blowing a cloud of smoke. "Who knows?"

"Hector," I said, "are you a Mason?"

Hector puffed thoughtfully on his cigar for a moment, his head half lost in the clouds. "If I am not, I would tell you no," he replied. "But if I am, I would also tell you no." Then he laughed enigmatically, and I decided to leave it at that. 🚸



The Rite Stuff

Exploring the many Masonic rituals of Latin America.

UNLIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS in the United States, Masonic bodies in Latin America historically have embraced ritualistic diversity. A result of the region's British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and U.S. colonial influence, this approach spawned a wide array of Masonic practices. Here, Diego Arana and Tadeu Matheus, the regional secretaries for Central and Latin America of the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle, offer an overview of some of the most notable rites found south of the border. – *MICHAEL RAMOS*

SCOTTISH RITE

Found in: All Latin American countries

The Scottish Rite is the most common Masonic system in the world—including in Latin America. Whereas many American Masons are familiar with its fourth through 32nd degrees, in Latin America the vast majority of lodges also confer the rite's first three (or "craft") degrees. The rite grew out of various French "high degree" systems and was exported throughout Europe and the new world. These "red" lodges were largely brought to Latin America by French and Spanish military groups.

YORK RITE 🖙 🗺 🚺

Found in: Argentina, Chile, Mexico

This system comprises three bodies that members pass through after completing the craft degrees: the Royal Arch Chapter, the Royal and Select Master Council, and the Knights Templar Commandery. Also known as the American Rite, it's most widely practiced in the U.S., from which it was introduced to Mexico in the 1820s. In the 20th century, the rite was revived in Mexico through a series of Englishspeaking expat lodges. That grand lodge still exists, today comprising some 20 "blue" lodges.

NATIONAL MEXICAN RITE 🚺 Found in: Mexico

The seeds of this rite, consisting of nine degrees, were planted in revolutionary France, but found their full flower in Mexico in 1825. Like all 19th century Mexican lodges, the rite struggled for survival amid political upheaval, but ultimately survived and still exists as one of the most distinctive systems of Masonry in Latin America. Similar to the French Rite, the National Mexican Rite tends to feature an adogmatic approach to the craft, including a long history of women's and coed lodges.

EMULATION RITUAL 📨 🙋 🗺

Found in: Argentina, Brazil, Chile

This ritual was formed in England following the union of the Premiere and Antient grand lodges in 1813. Today, it remains one of the most common rituals there and in countries where the United Grand Lodge of England has been or remains active.

SCHRÖDER RITE 🙋 🗺

Found in: Brazil, Chile

Developed in early 19th-century Germany, the Schröder Rite has a small presence in South America thanks to the German community there. A unique aspect of this ritual is its penchant for humanism, which focuses on the responsibility and impact of the human race instead of the divine or supernatural. Its unique blend of philosophy is distinctive among Masonic rituals.

MEMPHIS-MISRAIM 🚼 🥽

Found in: Dominican Republic, Ecuador Memphis-Misraim is a blend of several Masonic rites and is sometimes referred to as the Ancient and Primitive or Egyptian Rite. Formalized in Italy in the late 1880s, in some countries, it can contain up to 99 degrees. Generally unrecognized by mainstream Masonic bodies, it's often worked in coed lodges and has an interesting history filled with quasi-Masonic celebrities, such as the Italian military hero General Guiseppi Garibaldi and the occultist Theodor Reuss.

ADONHIRAMITE RITE 🙋 Found in: Brazil

This rite, developed in France in the 18th century, supposedly takes its name from the biblical figure of Adoniram, whom some consider to be the true architect of King Solomon's Temple. The rite consists of up to 12 degrees, similar to the Scottish Rite, terminating with a form of the Rose Croix degree. Its teachings propagate the idea that Freemasonry originally stemmed from the Middle and Near East. It's been worked in Brazil since the early 19th century.

FRENCH RITE 🙋 Found in: Brazil

This rite has an incredibly rich history. It was born in 18th-century France and has since found popularity in Brazil and elsewhere. The rite consists of seven degrees and has been embraced by many coed lodges and other continental-style Masonic bodies. The rite professes some unique lessons that trace to the earliest days of Freemasonry. *



ONCE YOU BEGIN TO SEE the signs of Brazil's infatuation with Freemasonry, you can't stop seeing them. There are the obvious ones, of course—the bumper stickers, signet rings, and lodge banners that are common to just about every part of the country. But look a bit deeper, and you're overwhelmed with subtle hints of a cultural phenomenon that hasn't just survived in the seat of South American power, but has thrived.

In Paraty, a Unesco World Heritage site and coastal tourist destination in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the cues are even more prevalent. Constructed by Portuguese Freemasons 250 years ago, the city is like a shrine to Masonry. Streetlights and building columns are engraved with geometric ciphers and painted blue and white. The very layout of the

city is a nod Masonic geometry, built on a grid of 33 blocks.

26 SUMMER 2022

MATHEW REAMER

LOU FERNANCO/CC; ALAMY

Above the city flies its distinctive and Masonicinspired flag, featuring three stars in a triangle.

These days, Brazil increasingly bears the marks of a country where Freemasonry is in the ascent. Whereas worldwide membership in the fraternity has generally been in decline, it has exploded in Brazil. There are more than 6,000 lodges in the country today. In the state of São Paulo alone, there are more than 800 lodges just affiliated with the Grande Oriente do Brasil-the largest of several Masonic governing bodies in the country. (São Paulo and California have similar-sized populations; by comparison, the Grand Lodge of California has just over 330 lodges.) Those numbers keep growing, too. And with them, so too do the outward manifestations of the country's Masonic influence.

It's not just in cities. Walk through a small town in the countryside and you're bound to stumble across a Masonic lodge room whose very presence seems to beg the question, How did that get

> The Grande Oriente do Brasil's can't-miss headquarters in **Brasilia**

here? Why has Freemasonry spread like wildfire in Brazil but not in, say, Ecuador? Like so much about the country, the answer lies in a complex blend of cultural and historic forces.

A PROUD HISTORY

Freemasonry has played a key role in the country's history. The first emperor of the republic, Dom Pedro I, was a committed Mason who, upon declaring independence from Portugal in 1822, named his advisor and fellow Mason, José Bonifácio, the first grand master of the Grand Oriente do Brasil.

The connection was fundamental to 19th century Brazil, says Monica Dantas, an associate professor at the Universidade de São Paulo and an expert on fraternalism in South America. Masonic lodges were a "privileged space," she says, where Brazil's founding fathers could "formulate a strategy for independence without being in the public eye." In the absence of political parties or a robust university system, lodges acted as an important vehicle for spreading new political thought-including the abolition of slavery.

That history still looms large in Brazil, which this year will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Grand Oriente. And unlike in many other countries, discretion has not necessarily been part of the equation. Members proudly display their lodge affiliation and often go to lengths to acknowledge one another in public. Masonry in Brazil, in other words, is hard to miss. In fact, the current vice president, Hamilton Mourão, recently appeared on the country's largest TV network to talk about Masonry. (A clip showed him at his lodge; when he appeared in studio, the house band welcomed him with a Masonic anthem.)

BOOM TIMES

Growth has been a major trend in Brazilian Masonry, particularly in the 21st century. The economic boom years of the early 2000s were crucial to that expansion. According to the World Bank, the size of Brazil's middle class more than doubled in the space of a decade. At the same time, interest spiked in Freemasonry. From 2003 to 2009, the Grand Oriente do Brasil (GOB) added nearly 500 lodges and 14,000 members. By 2013, between the national and state grand lodges, there were more than 213,000 Masons in Brazil spread across 6,500 lodges, making it one of the largest Masonic populations in the world. The bicentennial celebrations being held in each state have brought even more attention to the fraternity.

According to Gerald Koppe Jr., the deputy grand chancellor of foreign Masonic relations for the GOB, that membership growth has brought the average age of Brazil's Masons down dramatically. Today, he says, the median age of new members is 28. "We're initiating a lot of 20- and 21-year-olds, and we receive a lot of college students through outreach work with the universities," he says. Additionally, Masonry is popular among the members of Brazil's armed forces, further skewing its membership's age downward.

However, demographic trends can't fully explain the growth of Freemasonry in Brazil. For many, the answer lies in its members' ability to marry Masonic brotherhood with the Brazilian thirst for social life. That, says one member, explains the growing number of lodges in small towns, where Masonry can foster community networks and structure that are otherwise lacking. "People are proud of being known as a Mason," he offers. "It's a real badge of honor." 🚸



ROGERIO GOMES Santa Monica-Palisades Nº 307 Lux Sapientiae Nº 264 and Primeiro de Setembro No.461, Brazil

Brazil has one of the fastestgrowing Masonic communities in the world. What do you attribute that to?

In Brazilian culture, to become a Mason is seen as a way to grow personally, professionally, and as a leader. So people come in looking for that. But then the longer they're in the lodges, the more they learn about the philosophical teachings and the mystery of Masonry, and that's what keeps them there. And then of course there was also the Da Vinci Code.

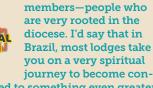
Is Masonry very visible in Brazil? Absolutely. The city I'm from has probably 100 lodges. In general, you can look at someone in Brazil and say, I know this guy's a Mason

because he'll put three dots in his signature, or τΗε because he wears the pin INTERNATIONAL on his jacket. If you're CONNECTION driving on the road and someone sees your

Masonic bumper sticker, they'll honk their horn three times at you, to say hi. Brazil is very social. People want to make friends, and this is a way to make friends

Does Masonry in Brazil reflect the country's Catholic heritage?

Oh yes, to the point that I know of many Catholic priests who are



nected to something even greater than yourself. That attracts a lot of people. And I think Catholicism and the symbols of Masonry have a lot in common. 🚸



FEDERICO JIMENEZ WILL NEVER FORGET his first experience in a Masonic lodge room. It was the early 1950s, in Aguascalientes, Mexico. Over dinner, he found himself seated beside the governor of the state. Rather than lord over the banquet, however, the governor served Jimenez—along with all the rest of the ranchers and tradesmen there. "They said, 'In here, everybody is equal," Jimenez, now 92, recalls.

Years later, Jimenez was still moved by that memory. So after he immigrated to California, he sought out the local Masons. As it turned out, he had friends with connections to a Spanish-speaking lodge in L.A. His friend could even serve as his *padrino*, or reference. And in 1969, despite speaking very little English, Jimenez reached out. Half a century later, he's still an integral part of the lodge.

That's a fairly common story at California's two Spanish-language lodges. At Maya № 793 and Panamericana № 513, both in Los Angeles, members

PHOTOGRAPHS

BY MATTHEW

REAMER

with ties to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America have created a special niche within California Masonry. Members there are able to celebrate and emphasize their heritage, reconnect with family customs, and keep traditions alive. Whether it's recent immigrants or folks who've been in the United States for generations, the two lodges offer something that can be found nowhere else: a Masonic familia.

"The minute I came into the lodge, I felt like I was at home with my family," says Christian Sermeno, master of Panamericana № 513. "When I'm there, I feel like I'm surrounded by all my tios."

A CULTURE WITHIN A CULTURE

It isn't just the language that sets California's Spanish lodges apart. Members there have built on traditions from a wide range of countries. The result is a unique blend of cultural and fraternal customs that's



Members of Panamerican No 513 form a chain of unity unique to California but representative of the lodge members' diversity.

"It's very spirited, very loud, and very fun," says Edguin Castellanos, a past master of Panamericana № 513 who was born in Belize. "That can be a turnoff for some people, but we're from Latino homes. That's part of who we are. That's what I fell in love with, that rich spirit."

The connection transcends individual nationalities. More than half of the two lodges' membership was born outside the United States. Among the countries represented there are Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Peru, Cuba, and Chile. For many, Freemasonry has been a way to establish social connections in a new country. It's also a bridge back

home, to family and friends in the fraternity abroad.

That bond is often deeply personal. Sermeno, for instance, first joined Vista № 687, north of San Diego. As he progressed through the degrees, however, he sought a way to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, who'd been a lodge master in El Salvador. Joining Panamericana № 513 and learning the ritual in Spanish was a way to feel closer to him.

Those family ties are a source of immense pride for many. When Oliver Alejandro Torrealba Torres was raised in **Yolo Nº 195** in Davis, a contingent from Maya № 793, where his father belongs, made the trip north to support him. In a nod to his

family's Venezuelan heritage, his degree was scheduled for June 24—that country's independence day (and also the feast day of St. John the Baptist). The significance of the date wasn't lost on him.

Then there's the simple matter of being around familiar faces. "There isn't a very big contingent of Latinos in California Masonry," says Edwin Torres, a charter member of Panamericana № 513. "For the most part, these are the only lodges where, as Latinos, we see people who look like us."

LONG ROAD HOME

Establishing that home away from home has been the project of generations. In the early 1950s, the Grand Lodge of California for the first time assigned

to be a Mason.

in lodge there?

Mexico, too, you read it. Here, you

have to have a very good memory

So you need permission to speak

In South America, we can't talk

once the meeting is open. Being

silent, we learn how to have our

thoughts together so that when

we do get an opportu-

nity to speak, we have

something meaningful

to share. After the meet-

ing, if a brother wishes

to speak, according to



Panamericana Nº 513 Nicolás de Piérola No 20 (Peru)

What are the biggest differences between lodges here and in Peru?

I've been able to visit lodges all over Latin America-Chile, Brazil, Mexico. They work very differently from here. All of them do the work very solemnly. When we're inside the temple, we sit up straight, legs together, hands on legs. You don't speak

when you're in lodge.

And here, the ritual is

done from memory.

That's incredible. In

South America and

THE **INTERNATIONAL** CONNECTION

their rank, they request permission from their warden.

Do you have a special appreciation for the international connections that Masonry offers?

When you visit a lodge in another country, you really feel the fraternity. I once went to a [table lodge] in Brazil with 300 Freemasons. When I came to the United States, I felt that these were brothers I'd known for years. It was the same feeling. 🚸

a special committee to scout for interest in forming a Spanish-speaking lodge, to complement the state's existing French-, German-, and Italian-speaking lodges. However, the issue proved contentious. Many within the fraternity argued against expanding foreign-language lodges, on the basis that they divided members along ethnic lines. In 1957, an affinity club led by the late Aurelio Gallegos of **Covenant №** 527 requested permission to form a Spanishspeaking lodge. The request was denied.

Gallegos and company were undeterred. And in 1959, the group did successfully charter a new lodge, Maya № 793. The lodge was not allowed to work in Spanish, which was still banned by the California Masonic Code. Regardless, it became the first lodge under the Grand Lodge of California to be specifically geared toward Latinos.

The idea proved popular. From an original membership of 54, Maya № 793 grew rapidly. In its first decade, the rolls doubled in size. By 1975, that necessitated a move to a larger meeting space, and the lodge purchased a hall in Monterey Park. By 1983, the lodge had reached a high of 189 members.

Importantly, it also took on an informal ambassadorship role in Latin America. In 1982, its past master, Alejandro Navarro, served as the grand master's representative at the National Masonic Congress, held in Mexico. The lodge became a regular guest of its counterparts across the border. "It was really impressive," Jimenez remembers. "We had a good relationship with the lodges in Mexicali and Baja. Every seat in the lodge room was taken."

SPANISH FOR BROTHERHOOD

Despite the lodge's success, it wasn't until 1992 that it finally fulfilled its founders' hopes. Forty years after the matter had been voted down, Gallegos again introduced legislation to allow Maya Lodge to recite the degrees in Spanish. Evidently, attitudes had changed in the intervening years. It passed.

Today, Maya is officially a bilingual lodge. Regular meetings are held in English, but candidates choose whether to receive the degrees in English or Spanish. Ritual "teams" proficient in each language step in when called upon, so not every officer needs to be word-perfect in both.

At Panamericana \mathbb{N}_{2} 513, the approach is more straightforward, at least linguistically.

Like Maya, Panamericana grew out of a club of Spanish-speaking Masons. That group formed in Granada Hills in 2000. Using the Spanish ritual



translated at Maya, the group began training a new cohort in a version of the craft that hews more closely to what's practiced in most of Latin America. "We felt there was a void in some ways in California Masonry-a cultural void," says Torres.

Panamericana's founders envisioned an allenveloping Latino Masonic experience. Not only would the ritual be performed in Spanish, but so would all meetings. The lodge would also embrace more of the esotericism found in Latin American lodge rooms. "The idea was, let's create a place where

we can have an above-andbeyond experience specifically for members who share this background," Torres says.

These days, Panamericana № 513 is also a "traditional observance" lodge. Members wear a suit and tie to meetings, place extra emphasis on

"It's very spirited, very loud, very fun... That's what I fell in love with, that rich spirit."

OSURE

their ritual performance, and host frequent lectures and symposia. Initiates are expected to produce research papers demonstrating a deep understanding of Masonic philosophy. "It's pretty intense," Torres acknowledges with a laugh. "But it's a labor of love, man. We have a lot of pride in this lodge, and it's aligned with our pride as Latinos."

Often, members of the two Spanish-speaking lodges enter with a long history in Freemasonry. Oscar Gomora, for instance, is one of several members of Panamericana № 513 who originally joined an "irregular" Spanish-speaking lodge (those not recognized by the Grand Lodge of California). Only later did he discover that the Grand Lodge of California

Charter mem bers of Mava Nº 793 in 1959.







Top: Members of Panamericana No 513 celebrate during a lodge Cinco de Mayo party in Pasadena Above: Past Master Sergio Soto waves el tricolor

included Spanish-speaking lodges. Now, he says, he appreciates the organization and support that the larger fraternity offers.

Past master Sergio Soto also joined Panamericana from an irregular lodge, where he says most members were unaware of matters of "regularity." In any case, he says, there's clearly an appetite for Masonry among Latinos in California-and one that

should be better catered to. "I think it's about time that California Masonry takes a look at the Latino community," he says. "Having lodges that are visible in Latino communities will help us get new members and be a way for people to come into the Grand Lodge of California."

THE NEXT EVOLUTION

Improving its visibility in the community is Panamericana's biggest goal, members say. When the lodge was first chartered, it was with the intention that it would serve as a temporary home for recent immigrants looking to join the fraternity, before they settled in elsewhere. There was talk of offering English as a second language courses. Those never quite materialized. But increasingly, the lodge is becoming a resource for recent arrivals.

Between scholarships for local students, a yearly backpack and school-supply drive, and book giveaways, the lodge has made itself known as a place

where immigrant families can turn for help. More and more, members say they're approached by people seeking asylum or in need of other forms of assistance, many of whom come with connections to Masonry back home. While there's no formal assistance program in place, the lodge has become adept at connecting those in need with muchneeded information and services.

Torres says that this work is helping the lodge become a "beacon" in the community. 'We're like this local incubator where people can come in and talk

to someone who can point them in the right direction," he says. "It's all very word-of-mouth, very community-focused."

That's the next step in the evolution of California's Spanish-language lodges, members say. More than 50 years after opening their doors, Castellanos is direct in his view of where Maya's and Panamericana's future potential lies. "In my opinion, a hub for immigrant brothers to come in and find help is exactly what they should be. We're a place they can call home." 🚸



SEE MORE ONLINE Check out a special web extra! Go behind the scenes with a video profile of Panamericana № 513 at californiafreemason.org/

panamericana513



Here for You, at Every Stage of Life THE MASONIC CENTER FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES PROVIDES

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ALL AGES. BY LAURA BENYS

FIRST IT WAS THE WEIGHT of isolation. Then it was the stress of reentry. All along, there has been the strain of living with fear and loss, inside a pressure cooker of change. And the effects are catching up with everyone.

"The pandemic has impacted all of us differently, but no one's been spared," says marriage and family therapist Kimberly Rich. "We all need emotional support right now."

ISTOCK

When Rich says "we all," she really does mean everyone. As executive director of the Masonic Center for Youth and Families, she's seen people at every stage of life struggle with the challenges of life in the pandemic. At MCYAF, Rich and her team work with children as young as 4 and

seniors in their 90s, as well as everything in between: adults, families, and teenagers.

That may come as a surprise to some Masons. A common misconception is that the organization focuses exclusively on young people.

It's true that MCYAF does specialize in supporting kids, teens, and young adults with psychological and behavioral challenges. And the center employs specially trained clinicians skilled at working with schoolkids to overcome academic difficulties. But it also offers a full range of services for adults, too. For instance, MCYAF provides individual and couples therapy, along with family therapy, for people of all ages. That includes seniors. As of this year, each campus of



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- Information and referrals
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- Shared housing for seniors in Covina

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the Masonic Homes of California has a full-time mental health clinician on staff.

That means that MCYAF is available to help just about anyone, anytime, with challenges like anxiety, stress, burnout, and depression. MYCAF helps couples keep their relationships healthy. They help families cope with change. And they help kids and teens manage the extraordinary challenges of growing up in the 2020s. These services are completely confidential and available virtually as well as in person. No one is turned away based on their ability to pay, and anyone with a Masonic affiliation receives a discount. (Additionally, MCYAF is now Medicare certified.)

"We're here to go through the heaviness of life with you," says Jodi Mikel, the center's program manager.

A BENEFIT HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

In MCYAF, California Masons have an extraordinary resource at their disposal—and one that Mikel wants to see put to even greater use.

Elsewhere, counseling and mental health services can be hard to come by or prohibitively expensive. Especially since the pandemic began, several community-run mental health programs are filled beyond capacity, and private-practice therapists have in many cases stopped accepting insurance. The cost of a single session can be shockingly expensive. Then again, many people

A Range of Services, for a Range of People

GROUP THERAPY AND WORKSHOPS Dynamic groups and workshops connect children, individual family members, or peer groups with shared experiences.

SENIOR WELLNESS MCYAF offers senior support services to help navigate illness, grief, loneliness, and end-of-life transitions.

EDUCATIONAL THERAPY

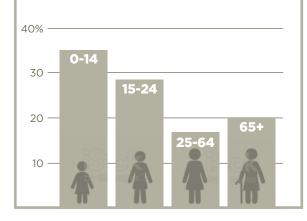
Custom learning plans for kids with learning differences, plus homework and consultation support for specific needs.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY THERAPY Building trusting relationships allow-

ing clients to explore areas of concern in a safe and accepting environment.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

MCYAF services by clients' age.



never get that far. "At most places," Rich says, "the wait lists are outrageous."

That's not the case at MCYAF.

"We never turn a Mason or their family member away," Rich says. "No matter how full we are, we will find a way. We will be here for you."

A person or family doesn't need to be in the midst of a full-blown crisis to call, either. Mikel stresses that it's OK to reach out even for problems you might be tempted to dismiss as too minor for the professionals. "I think a common misconception is that people need to stay in therapy for years," she says. "Short-term support allows people to check in as needed to navigate a specific challenge."

Rich agrees. "Problems tend to get smaller after therapy," she says. "Sometimes you need another person, a professional, to help you sort it out. Some of us are still dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation from the pandemic. Other folks are anxious or depressed. We're here for all needs, great and small. We know how to help."

Over the past two years, more and more Masons and their loved ones have tapped into that help. Time and again, Rich, Mikel, and the rest of the MCYAF team hear a common refrain: "I wish I knew about you sooner."

Now, they're on a mission to change that.

"It's really important that every Mason knows they have this invaluable resource waiting for them," Rich says. "Life has a lot of ups and downs. You never know what's going to happen around the bend. You may not need us now, but in case you need us in the future, you should know we're here." 🚸

in your life deserve the benefits of being a Job's Daughter, Rainbow Girl, or DeMolay. Learn about ways you and your family can support our Masonic youth orders today. Opportunities are open for youth and adults. Strengthening our Masonic youth orders today ensures a vibrant future for Freemasonry tomorrow—and provides valuable life skills for the children and teens.

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CALIFORNIA FREEMASON 35

(We'd tivel

Patrick Muldoon

11-YEAR MASON

PAST MASTER, WINDSOR LODGE № 181 • MOUNT JACKSON Nº 295 • ACADEMIA Nº 847

California Freemason: As an operations controller for the Golden Gate Bridge District, has Masonry shaped your professional life? Patrick Muldoon: Masonry has definitely shaped my approach to servant-leadership. I really enjoy encouraging the personal growth of the people I work with. That's something I got from Masonry. I was coached and mentored by some fantastic men in my lodges. I remember a past master telling me at my third-degree ceremony that I'd get back what I give out. He was absolutely right.

CFM: As a member of the Cornerstone Society, you've set aside a gift for the California Masonic Foundation. What inspired you to do that? **PM:** Volunteering has been part of my life as far back as I can remember. It's an important value that I've tried to teach my two kids. They give 10 percent of their own money to charity or to projects they connect with. I'm really proud they get a sense of joy from giving back. When it comes to Masonry, giving to the Cornerstone Society allows me to ensure that our fraternity and its services will remain long after I'm gone.

CFM: You're also a captain for Masons4Mitts. What makes that program special to you?

PM: My wife and I both coach youth sports, so we get to see how kids develop, build friendships, and learn life skills through sports. All kids should be able to join a team and learn to support

TO DONATE

Please visit masonicfoundation.org

themselves and one another. Masons4Mitts helps kids get that positive, life-changing experienceespecially kids who may not otherwise have that opportunity to participate. And then Masons Night at the Ballpark is a big yearly highlight for me because I can bring my family to a game, and they can see just how much the fraternity supports our community. - JUSTIN JAPITANA

PHOTOGRAPH BY ARTIN KLIME

Assisted Living and Memory Care, Elevated

AT THE MASONIC HOMES Welcome home! The Masonic Home at Union City is pleased to announce the grand opening of its new Pavilion, where those in need of memory care and assistance with day-to-day living can enjoy comfortable living quarters in a beautiful, community-minded atmosphere.

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Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of California

173rd Annual Communication

OCTOBER 21-23, 2022

SAN FRANCISCO

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at the California Masonic Memorial Temple Friday, Oct. 21–Sunday, Oct. 23

PARTNERS AND FAMILY LUNCH

at the Masonic Center for Youth and Families Saturday, October 22

GRAND MASTER'S BANQUET

at the Fairmont Hotel's Venetian Room Saturday, October 22

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The

CALIFORNIA

The California Masonic Memorial Temple is a fraternal landmark—and a community treasure.

Assisted Living and Memory Care, Elevated

www.seen The used start AT THE MASONIC HOMES

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CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

FALL 2022 yol 04

IN EVERY ISSUE

SNAPSHOT 7 In a centuries-old tradition, Masons dedicated the cornerstone of a Veterans' Affair building in Northern California.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Grand Master Jeffery M. Wilkins reflects on the importance-and potential-of the California Masonic Memorial Temple.

THE MOSAIC

In Yucca Valley, an artist and skateboarder is shredding perceptions about Masonry [PAGE 5]; a popular TV mystery's Masonic connections [PAGE 7]; meet a party-starting Bay Area Mason [PAGE 8]; inside the Lewis degree, a special father-son connection [PAGE 9]; at Santa Barbara № 192, a spit-shine that's more than skin deep [PAGE 10]; and a must-see artistic legacy lives on at Downey United № 220 [PAGE 11].

MASONIC ASSISTANCE 4

At the Masonic Homes in Union City, the Siminoff Tem**ple** has a history that connects generations of Masons.

Mark Pressey has a special

California Masonry.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH AND

TOP RIGHT: GREG CHOW

RIGHT: JOE FLETCHER/

SÍOL STUDIOS

connection with the home of

DONOR PROFILE 44 As chairman of the California Masonic Memorial Temple,

From its esoteric iconography to its allusions to fraternal and state history, the endomosaic rewards a close reading.

FIGHTING THE LIGHT

Inside the massive effort to restore and conserve Emile Norman's light-filled work.

THE TEMP

Nearly 65 years after it first opened to the public, the California Masonic Memorial Temple continues to evolve.

SPECIAL (O) SECTION

15 WINDOW OF WONDER

Emile Norman's endomosaic mural is a treasured work of public art and the crowning achievement of an uncompromising artistic career.

BEHIND THE EYE



WHAT'S OLD IS **NEW AGAIN**

At Freemasons' Hall, the past and future of Masonic lodge rooms collide.

GRAND LODGE OFFICERS DEDICATE THE NEW VETERANS' AFFAIRS BUILDING AT 3455 KNIGHTON FORMAL CORNERNSTONE CEREMONY. ONE DAY PRIOR, A SIMILAR DEDICATION WAS PERFORMED AT THE V.A. **BUILDING IN CHICO.**

7/09/2022 | 1:10 P.M. **A Seal of** Approval

E/E/

F.W. AUXILIAR

SNAPSHOT MER

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VETERANS

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ONE OF THE MOST public displays of Freemasonry—and one of the fraternity's oldest and most treasured traditionsis the Masonic cornerstone ceremony. From George Washington's blessing of the Capitol building in 1793 to the California capitol's cornerstone-laying in 1850, Masons for centuries have proudly dedicated civic monuments big and small. That tradition remains alive, as seen in a pair of events this summer in which Grand Master Jeffery M. Wilkins and other officers of the grand lodge joined with members of Chico-Leland Stanford Nº 111 and Reading-Trinity Nº 27 to dedicate Veterans' Affairs buildings in Chico and Redding (the latter is pictured here).

PHOTOGRAP HBY RUSS

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

FOR TIME IMMEMORIAL

The California Masonic Memorial Temple honors fallen Masons—and also points the way forward.



Lodge building—what would eventually become the California Masonic Memorial Temple-came about in the wake of World War II. It was a time when our fraternity was expanding rapidly, but also grieving for its fallen brothers. Though the building wasn't completed until 1958, it was meant to honor those who'd "made the supreme sacrifice," said Past Grand Master Arthur Brouillet in 1946. It would be, in his words, a

memorial "which will be living and pulsating with daily life."

I certainly think it is. I love that our address is 1111 California, in honor of Veterans Day (celebrated on 11/11). Having served in the Army, this brings me immense pride, especially knowing that so many of our members have served our nation with distinction and honor.

The first time I walked into the building, I was blown away by the massive columns at the entrance and the light-filled endomosaic. This is a beautiful space, and one I love getting to spend time in with my fellow Masons. The more I visited, the more I thought about ways we could share the building's splendor with the wider community-a way to tell the story of Freemasonry in California to the general public. Starting this fall, we'll be doing just that, by using QR codes to help visitors understand what makes this building so special.

This being my last message as grand master, I want to take a moment to thank you, the Masons of California, for putting your trust in me. This is the greatest honor that could ever be bestowed on me. I've been asked what the best part of being grand master is, and without a doubt, it's getting to meet on the level with brothers in lodges and at events across the state. My experience as a Mason has been expanded beyond my wildest dreams, and my life has been made so much richer for it. For that, I'm eternally grateful.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Annual Communication. May the Supreme Architect of the Universe bless and protect you, your families, and our beloved craft.

Sincerely and fraternally,



Jeffery M. Wilkins Grand Master of Masons in California

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Η Ε Α Covering California reemason PHOTOGRAPHS BY

MATTHEW REAMER

AFFINITI

The Shredder

IN THE HIGH DESERT, AN ART-MAKING, SKATEBOARDING MASON **IS REWRITING PERCEPTIONS.** BY JUSTIN JAPITANA

WHEN HE FIRST STARTED his Masonic-skateboard-deck giveaway program, Joey Buice didn't have much of a plan for how it would work. That was OK with him. As an artist and designer living in the high-desert town of Yucca Valley, on the northwestern edge of Joshua Tree NationalPark, Buice embraces a decidedly improvisational, do-ityourself spirit. When he's touched by a creative spark, Buice uses what's close at hand to meet his needs and, he hopes, make the world a brighter place. Or at least a little less predictable. ¶ So when a local skateboarding company he'd been connected to dropped a shipment of decks off with him, he scrawled the square and compass on them, drove to the local skate park, and gave the

"I like to keep things curvy and moving, because you don't want to stay in one spot."

JOEY BUICE HAS LAUNCHED A SKATEBOARD EQUIPMENT GIVEAWAY PROGRAM THAT HIS LODGE NOW PARTICIPATES IN.

haul away to some grateful, if possibly perplexed, local kids. That spirit of mischievous invention pervades Buice's life. From his interactive art installations to his involvement in Yucca Valley Lodge № 802, Buice's instinct is to make something out of nothing.

Over the past two years, Buice's impromptu skate park drop-offs have grown. In addition



to upcycle. His motivation isn't publicity, he says, but rather paying it forward. "Sometimes there won't be anyone at the park, and I'll just leave some stuff for the next kid to grab," he says. **AN ARTIST IN REPOSE**

As a punk-rock installation artist, Buice doesn't quite match up with the stereotypical Mason. But his interest in the craft is genuine, and he's been embraced wholeheartedly by his lodge.

to the donated decks, he takes in

T-shirts and other merchandise

from Gimme Danger, the L.A.

clothing company he works for

as a buyer, combing secondhand

shops in search of vintage items

Originally from Lake Tahoe, Buice moved to Orange County and fell into the local punk scene. That led him to the annual Joshua Tree Music Festival, where he volunteered in set construction and stage design. Four years ago, he relocated to the desert full-time, where he now produces surrealistic art installations. "They've given me pretty complete creative control," he says of the festival organizers.

In his festival designs, Buice works exclusively with repurposed materials, including acrylic house paint and discarded lumber. "I like textured, abstract stuff," he says. One of his ongoing projects is a one-on-one improvisational show called Antiplat Atelier, in which Buice faces a single viewer inside an "Interrogationgatron"basically a repurposed toolshed. Inside, the shed is rigged with artworks and props-there isn't

always a distinction between the two-and Buice engages the viewer in intense, sometimes nonsensical conversation. "I'm just trying to get them off guard and to leave in a better mood than they came in with," he explains.

Growing up in the punk scene, he says, "everything was pretty heavy on the DIY, so that's what got me to put myself out there."

In fact, Buice says that lately, he's increasingly drawn back to music-he posts his records on Soundcloud. "I never stopped writing songs and poems, but during the pandemic I found myself writing more," he says. "It's a whole different process for me now. It took me to a different place."

ON THE LEVEL

Buice compares his artistic and life mantras to transition skatingmoving from the flat surface up the walls of a ramp or bowl. "I like to keep things curvy and moving, because you don't want to stay in one spot," he says. He sees in that an apt metaphor. "Mental-healthwise, [stasis] is not a good thing. Even if you're swinging back, you're moving, making momentum and ultimately getting yourself somewhere higher or farther."

So when in 2018 Buice felt himself being drawn toward Freemasonry, he acted on it. According to lodge master T.C. Dowden, Buice made his mark right away. "Joey isn't a wallflower," he says. "He lends a hand every chance he gets, whether it's painting the dining room or cleaning carpets. He's a genuinely cheerful, likable guy."

As for how he fits into the culture of the lodge, which Dowden says has historically tended toward older members, he says Buice has added some much-needed energy. "He's gregarious," Dowden says

with a chuckle. "He's one of the good young millennials. He injects some humor and life into the lodge, but when it's time to be serious, he's able to do that, too." This year, Buice is serving as his district's Masons4Mitts captain, and his outgoing personality has paid off in fundraising efforts for the youth-sports program. He's also begun passing the hat after stated meetings to purchase more skateboarding equipment for local kids. Buice says he has designs on having the lodge sponsor a skate competition in the future, and he hopes that when a nearby skate park opens in 2024, the lodge can lay the cornerstone for it.

Whether it's degree work or kickflips, from Buice's perspective, it all comes from the same place of creativity. "Temples or cathedrals can look like upsidedown skateboard parks if you use your imagination," he says with a laugh. "You can probably compare the components of skating to the working tools of Masonry or some other life lessons. But I won't get too ahead of myself." 🚸



MORE ONLINE Check out a video profile of Joey Buice as he skates, makes art, and explains how Masonry ties it all together. californiafreemason.org/ shredder



6 FALL 2022





Mystery in the Lodge

IN MASTERPIECE'S ENDEAVOUR. **A MASONIC REFERENCE IS** ILLUMINATED.

IN AN EARLY EPISODE of PBS' Masterpiece mystery Endeavour, the prequel to the longrunning mystery series Inspector Morse, a fellow detective mentions that he's been invited to join "a certain ancient fraternity." The young Morse replies, "A man can't serve two masters."

What's probably a fairly oblique quip for most viewers is in fact one of several allusions in the series to Freemasonry. Often mysterious and sometimes more, the references to Masonry suggest someone with at least a passing familiarity with the craft. And indeed, series creator Russell Lewis tells California Freemason that while he's never been a member himself, he had a relative who was and that he "did once work as a *plongeur*"-hired help-"at a lodge in Surrey. I thought the building and its decor were quite beguiling, and the objects in [the] sundry display cabinet fascinating," he says.

Fans of Lewis's original Morse series may recall earlier nods to the craft. An episode titled "Masonic Mysteries" involved the titular detective being framed for a murder at a rehearsal of Mozart's Magic Flute. In Endeavour, the series uses the secrecy surrounding Masonry to similar dramatic-though not always flattering-effect. For instance, a storyline in season eight implicates a lodge in a police-corruption ring-a reference to a real-life British scandal in the 1960s and '70s. Still, for viewers with a connection to Masonry, the thrill of catching the odd glimpse of an apron or officer's jewel may well outweigh any sinister insinuations. The ninth and final season is expected in late 2022 or early **2023.** \Diamond —Ian A. Stewart



MEMBER PROFIL

Zahid Peoples

Member since 2021 Martinez Nº 41 **Dancer and** entertainer

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN KLIMEK

California Freemason: You're a professional dancer and sports-team hype man. How did you get your start?

Zahid Peoples: I've been dancing since high school, and I kept at it while I was in college studying for law school. I did a few corporate events and bar mitzvahs, that sort of thing, and then one day I saw a listing looking for dancers for the 49ers. It said it wouldn't pay very much or very often, but it's great

ZAHID PEOPLES FIRES UP THE CROWD AT A SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS GAME

exposure. I'm the kind of person who sees the vastness of an opportunity. So I took the job and danced for the 49ers, and eventually that led me to work with the Golden State Warriors, Oakland A's, and San Francisco Giants.

CFM: Your job is to get people excited and have fun. Are you able to bring that into your life outside of sports?

ZP: It's a lot like Masonry. It's this band of brothers. We're all working toward a common goal, and that's elevating the experiences people have. That's why I'm an artist. I love creating entertainment, especially for someone to be able to go, "Wow."

CFM: Who are some of the acts you've performed with?

ZP: I've break-danced with Run-DMC. I danced onstage with P-Lo at Outside Lands. I've performed with the Foo Fighters, Gwen Stefani, E-40, Weezer. And then for Super Bowl 50, I was an on-field performer for Beyoncé, Bruno Mars, and Coldplay. That was the most incredible experience.

CFM: How did you get interested in Freemasonry? **ZP:** My grandfather on my mother's side was a Mason. I didn't know much about it, but it was always in the back of my mind. Then, in 2019, I was touring with a Disney Junior show called Choo Choo Soul. I met a guy there who'd brought his kids to the show, and he was a Prince Hall Mason. And I thought, I'd like to get into this. So I read through 15 hours of Freemasonry for Dummies and thought, I resonate with all of this.

CFM: Have you ever been roped into performing at your lodge?

ZP: [Laughs] No one ever has to rope me into dancing! I end up performing out of pure reaction. So yeah, last New Year's Eve party, I did a little leadfollow where I call out the moves and do a couple eight counts. That's just what I do. Someone told me that night my dancing is infectious. To me, that's perfect. $\oint -IAS$



MASONIC EDUCATION

Generations in the Making

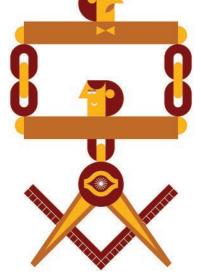
THE SELDOM-SEEN LEWIS DEGREE **BINDS MASONIC FATHERS AND SONS.**

ON A THURSDAY evening in May, Jerome Ortiz prepared to experience something few Masons ever get to see. In front of a packed lodge room, his father, Victor Ortiz, would raise him to the sublime degree of Master Mason. From then on, the two would know each other not only as father and son, but also as brothers.

There's yet another name for members of the select group of secondgeneration Masons raised by their fathers: a Lewis, in reference to an ancient iron tool used to hoist large stones. The rare occasion of a Lewis-degree conferral can be commemorated with a special pin shaped like the tool, a sort of looped shackle with three vertical bars underneath.

While it's widely recognized elsewhere, the Lewis degree was formally introduced to California only in 2016, by then-Grand Master David Perry. Perry compares the metaphor of the Lewis with the opening verses of

1 Kings 2:1, when David encouraged his son Solomon to live an upright life. Perry learned about the custom through his travels to other jurisdictions. Not coincidentally, that same



RITUAL

MASTERS TOGETHER.

FILE THIS UNDER possible Masonic firsts: This May, S.W. Hackett Nº 574 in San Diego held a second-degree ceremony for Ethan Carswell with current masters sitting in every position. "The theater of it was really next-level," Carswell says. "I met some great people and great mentors." The officers on hand included David Murray (Santa Maria No 580), who served as master: Jeffrev Powell (Consuelo Nº 325) as senior warden: Nicholas Hoffman (Black Mountain Nº 845) as junior warden; Walter Von Westphalen (Point Loma Nº 620) as secretary; Ronald Banci (South West No 283) as treasurer; and Percival Bautista (Silver Gate Three Stars № 296), who served as marshal and presented the charge. In addition, Jonathan Robles (San Diego Nº 35) served as chaplain; Roberto Reyes (East San Diego Nº 561) was senior deacon; Mark de la Cruz (Amity Nº 442) was junior deacon; David Descoteaux (Heartiand Nº 576) was senior steward: David Diaz (Lux Nº 846) was junior steward; and Michael Singer (Novus Veteris Nº 864) was tiler. "It was top-notch," Carswell said. "It makes me want to give back to the lodge that gave me so much." $\oint -IAS$

year, he participated in a Lewis ceremony by raising his own son, Nicholas Leija, at **Napa** Valley № 93. That same night, Leija's childhood friend, Russell Medina, was also raised by his father, Mikal Litzza, making it an extra-rare double Lewis degree night. At the Annual Communication that year, Grand Master Perry presented the Grand Lodge of California's first-ever Lewis jewel to Nicholas. Says Leija, "As Masons, we're trying to raise good men. What better way than through your son? I'm proud of my dad for bringing back the Lewis award."

> For his part, Perry says he now feels "blessed to have lived a life my son feels like following."

> That's a familiar refrain among California's Lewis Masons. "It's very emotional for a father to see his offspring

follow in his footsteps," says Victor Ortiz, who traveled widely as a member of the Navy and even served as grand master of the Grand Lodge of Japan. "I have three boys, and I never told them to join. They need to come of their own free will and accord. It's hard to explain the feelingthe joy—of knowing my son is coming to an organization that really was my life."

The Ortiz family shares more than just Masonry between generations, as both father and son have served in the military. Jerome Ortiz, of Claude H. Morrison № 747, says that dual bond is strengthened when he meets other veterans or active-duty members in lodge. To know he shares that sense of camaraderie with his father makes his membership even more special.

So while it's often said that you can choose your friends but not your family, the Lewis degree shows that sometimes, you can have both. ♦ — TONY GILBERT

Masterfully Done

A SPECIAL DEGREE CONFERRAL BRINGS SAN DIEGO'S LODGE



MASTER MARK SPURLOCK-BROW **POSES ON THE** RENOVATED BALCONY.

The Spit-Shine

HOW A SIMPLE RESTORATION JOB IS REVITALIZING SANTA BARBARA Nº 192.

SEVEN YEARS AGO, when Nikolay Seraphim was hired to retouch the entryway to the stately Santa Barbara Masonic Temple, he looked over the old building from across East Carrillo Street. Each time he looked at it, his eyes kept drifting upward.

Seraphim, a stonemason by trade, had worked for years for a restoration company, bringing old city halls, theaters, and churches back to life. So he had an inkling

that the four-story, circa-1925 temple was hiding a few secrets. Above him, on the second-floor balcony, something was out of place. The arched ceiling was painted a flat, dull white, unlike the ornate character of the rest of the building. So he pored over old photographs and even asked some of the longesttenured members of Santa Barbara Nº 192, including 86-year-old Past Master Nevin Chamberlain, if they knew anything about the ceiling. No one did.



So Seraphim started peeling away the paint, layer by layer. And before long, the balcony's brightly colored, gold-lined plasterwork began to emerge—an exquisite brocade of Masonic symbols and figures. Today, as one walks past the old Carl Werner-designed temple (the same architect behind notable Masonic temples in Sacramento, Oakland, and Bakersfield), it's practically impossible not to look up and

marvel at the many mermaids, candelabras, and working tools carved into the archway.

The building's exterior restoration offers a nice parallel to the revitalization happening within. And it underscores just how important the physical characteristics of many Masonic lodges are to the sense of community and place-not to mention intrigue-they inspire. Whereas many other lodges of Santa Barbara's vintage decamped from their stately downtown halls

in favor of large suburban centers with ample parking, those that remained in place retain a powerful connection to their town's history. Says lodge secretary Jeff Matson, who also serves as the head of the Rose Croix chapter of the Scottish Rite, it was the building's architecture that first drew him in. After first laying eyes on

"I didn't know what any of it meant, but I knew I had to ioin."

its mysterious ornamentation, "I didn't know what any of it meant, but I knew I had to join," he says.

Today, the temple still seems to beckon to people. Standing out among the sea of Spanish-style structures in downtown Santa

Barbara, the building was one of the few in town to survive the massive earthquake of 1925, which struck just weeks after the temple's completion. In addition to Seraphim's recent work, plans call for adding a memorial plaque to the ground-floor façade later this year, near where the lunchtime crowd hangs out. The lodge also hosts frequent movie and game nights and degree rehearsals for each of the several bodies that call it home, including chapters of the York and Scottish Rite. That's created a sense of momentum for the lodge, which recently celebrated its sesquicentennial. "It feels like we're being rediscovered by a new generation," Matson says. "We're seeing more younger guys coming in, in their twenties and thirties."

More work is underway inside, too: A second-floor reading library is being renovated, where researchers will be able to tap into the lodge's extensive history. (The charter for Santa Barbara № 192 is from 1868; two other since-consolidated lodges that met there, La Cumbre № 642 and Magnolia № 242, date from 1875 and 1926, respectively.) In addition to the Scottish Rite's RiteCenter language program offices on the fourth floor, other parts of the byzantine temple include a large costume and changing room, lodge halls for the blue lodge and Scottish Rite chapters, additional offices, meeting spaces, a dining hall, and commercial kitchen. Plans are also forming to commemorate the building's centennial in 2025.

For Matson and others, the hope is that the TLC shown for the historic temple will continue to serve as the lodge's most visible advertisement for Freemasonry generally. At a minimum, it helped bring one new member into the fold. In fact, just a few months after beginning work on the building's façade, Seraphim submitted his petition to join. Today, he's a Master Mason with the lodge. & –IAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATHEW SCOTT



TRAVELODGE

In L.A., an Artist Leaves His Legacy at Lodge

THERE'S NO MISSING THE EGYPTIAN-INSPIRED WALL ART AT DOWNEY UNITED Nº 220.

WHEN RAJ CHAMPANERI passed away last June, there was little doubt that his memory would live on inside Downey United Nº 220, where he'd been a member since 2014.

In fact, his legacy there isn't likely to be forgotten anytime soon: He's the member behind the showstopping Egyptianthemed mural and sculpture that covers the hall's entire 16-foot-long eastern wall. after all. Affectionately known as the "Raj Mahal," the piece includes an 8-foot-tall golden square and compass that juts out from the wall, creating a floating effect. On either side of it are two life-sized sarcophagi, painted to appear three-dimensional. Behind them, the wall is plastered in elaborate hieroglyphs and

plexiglass replicas of Masonic jewels. In 2020, Champaneri explained, "The closer you get to the wall, the more character it reveals."

Champaneri was an artist and designer outside of lodge, too. Among his creations are his so-called "Exoticmishaps," a collection of meticulously crafted dioramas of car crashes involving luxury automobiles. Another series was his "Goldgraphs," images made with paint mixed with ground-up metals and diamond dust. In his career, **Champaneri produced works** for the likes of Queen Elizabeth and Janet Jackson.

However, at least for the members of Downey United No 220. it's the Rai Mahal that will live on, a testament to the mysticism and wonder that Freemasonry inspires. 🚸 —JJ



-The

IT'S A WARM SUMMER evening in San Fran- large majority are unlikely to even know the cisco as patrons line up to enter the California Masonic Memorial Temple. In less than an hour, very few people ever refer to the California the comedian Chris Rock will begin his set. As is increasingly common, guests have been asked to lock away their phones, so the queue to pass through the front doors is backed up onto California Street, where the city's iconic cable cars periodically roll by.

That's no accident. Since opening in 1958, the CMMT has always played a dual role. To the fraternity, it's the general headquarters of the Masons of California-their meeting Despite the slow-moving line, tonight's audiplace, library, and the staff offices of the Grand Lodge of California. Its operations also supence seems to be in good spirits, displaying the cheerful giddiness of a big night out. That's a port the charitable activies of the California near permanent fixture here, as the audito-Masonic Foundation. Externally, it's an enterrium stage is host to some 79 live shows per tainment venue geared toward the enjoyment year, along with numerous private and corpoof a public with slim knowledge of Freemarate events. In all, about 250,000 visitors pass sonry. Now, almost 65 years later, there's through the doors of the California Masonic hope that the building—by whatever name Memorial Temple annually, making it one of it's known—can play yet another role: as a the city's most visited venues. vehicle to help propel Freemasonry in Cali-Drinks in hand, the guests make their way fornia into the future.

to their seats. On their way, they pass by several noteworthy markers: a golden square and compass carved into the white marble of the building's façade; twin 23-foot-high globes; and the 48-by-38 foot endomosaic history of Freemasonry in California. A ings, but tonight's crowd for the most part seems unaware of the architectural, historical, and especially fraternal significance

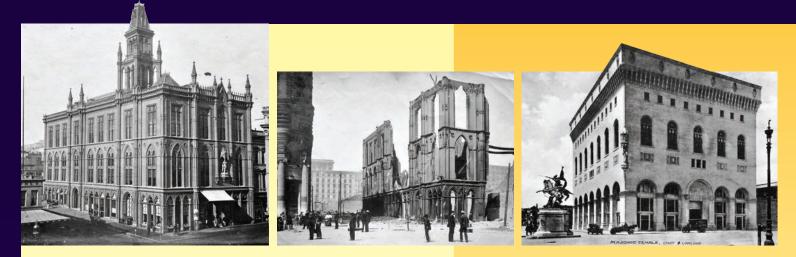
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For 64 years, the California Masonic Memorial Temple has evolved along with the fraternity that calls it home. Now it's entering a new era. BY CHRISTOPHER VERPLANCK

building's full name. Outside of the fraternity, Masonic Memorial Temple. To most, it's simply "the Masonic."

"MORE COMMODIOUS QUARTERS"

marble columns flanking the front doors Freemasonry in California goes all the way and topped by celestial and terrestrial back to the gold rush of 1848-50, when fortune seekers from around the worldmural, full of images and references to the including many Masons-flooded into the state. The Grand Lodge of California few snap photos of the evocative surround- was initially established in April 1850 in the so-called Red House on Fifth and J streets in Sacramento, exercising jurisdiction over 11 lodges across California and of the building they're visiting. In fact, a Hawaii. Masons played an important role



From left: The first Grand Lodge building in San Francisco, located at Post and Montgomery; the building in the wake of the 1906 earthquake and fire; and the later Grand Lodge temple at 25 Van Ness. in securing California's admission to the union in September 1850, and many of California's early civic and business leaders were Masons, including Samuel Brannan, Thomas Starr King, and Leland Stanford.

The Grand Lodge relocated to San Francisco in 1863. For many years, it was headquartered in an impressive hall at the northwest corner of Post and Montgomery streets, where it remained until the 1906 earthquake, which destroyed the building. After meeting at various locations for several years, the Grand Lodge moved into the new San Francisco Masonic Temple at 25 Van Ness in 1913, where it stayed for nearly half a century. Designed by Bliss & Faville in the Venetian Revival style, the building is now operated by the city of San Francisco.

Postwar, the fraternity began to outgrow the Van Ness building and required, in the words of a later temple committee member, "more commodious quarters." Membership in fraternal societies such as the Masons, the Elks, and the Odd Fellows surged after World War II. Between 1946 and 1953, the number of Masons in California nearly doubled, reaching

From the beginning, its location and design were meant to demonstrate a sense of the fraternity's civic pride and institutional might. a high of 225,000. That growth had a profound effect not just on the fraternity, but on the state as a whole. For members of the Greatest Generation, the war had been a tremendous social mixer,

and the subsequent rise of suburbanization broke apart traditional ethnic enclaves. In the newly built suburbs, fraternal societies provided an Americanized alternative to traditional religious and ethnicbased organizations. In addition to opportunities for socializing, fraternal organizations offered a sense of belonging, especially with their ritualized pageantry and charitable activities.

By the late 1940s, the 20,000-square-foot Grand Lodge temple on Van Ness was straining to

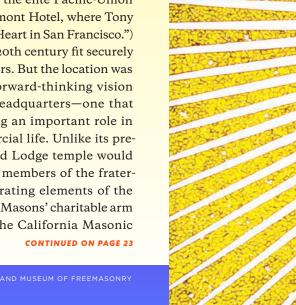
accommodate the yearly Annual Communication. By 1952, the situation was critical enough that the meeting was moved to the 8,500-capacity San Francisco Civic Auditorium, where it would be held for each of the next five years. Meanwhile, the administrative functions of the Grand Lodge were also severely short on space. A 1947 report commissioned by the Grand Lodge recommended finding a new home at once, to be ready for move-in by the fall of 1950.

The booming fraternity, which had added 100,000 members in less than a decade, needed a new home to match its new scale and ambition. So it looked to the top of the hill.

A HOME ON HIGH

The location of today's California Masonic Memorial Temple is significant, though it was perhaps a stroke of luck that it ever worked out. Standing proudly atop Nob Hill, one of San Francisco's most coveted neighborhoods, the modernistic temple is a departure from the stately Beaux Arts hotels and apartment buildings that surround it. From the beginning, its location and design were meant to demonstrate a sense of the fraternity's civic pride and institutional might. (Among its eminent neighbors are Grace Cathedral, the seat of the Diocese of California; the elite Pacific-Union Club; and the luxurious Fairmont Hotel, where Tony Bennett first sang "I Left My Heart in San Francisco.")

The fraternity of the mid-20th century fit securely in among those lofty neighbors. But the location was also a manifestation of a forward-thinking vision for the fraternity and its headquarters—one that saw the organization playing an important role in the city's social and commercial life. Unlike its previous locales, the new Grand Lodge temple would exist not solely to serve the members of the fraternity. Instead, revenue-generating elements of the building would help fund the Masons' charitable arm (what would later become the California Masonic CONTINUED ON PAGE 23





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Emile Norman never became a household name. But his massive artwork remains a treasure of California Freemasonry. **BY SARAH HOTCHKISS**

NOT EVERY ARTIST is an inventor. But when it came to the massive light-filled multimedia mural that greets visitors at the California Masonic Memorial Temple on Nob Hill in San Francisco, Emile Norman's mode of artmaking was so novel it needed a name.

Stretching practically the entire length of the foyer's southern wall, Norman's "endomosaic" is a stunning sight, one that for more than half a century has made an indelible impression on the thousands of visitors each year who come to the building. In scale and splendor, it's one of San Francisco's most impressive pieces of public art and the crowning achievement of a creative visionary.

Gazing over the 48-by-38-foot work, which is chock-full of Masonic symbolism, the mind whirrs with questions. But perhaps what's most interesting about the piece is how it came to be at all. How did a littleknown Big Sur artist, working well outside the mainstream, with no formal training or any connection to Masonry, wind up creating something so integral to the home of California Freemasonry?

Ultimately, the story of the endomosaic is one of serendipity-but also of curiosity, artistic experimentation, and love.

AN UNLIKELY MEDIUM, AN UNLIKELY ARTIST

It may be that Emile Norman was destined to become an artist, but the circumstances of his childhood didn't exactly encourage it. Born in 1918 and raised on a walnut farm in the San Gabriel Valley, he made his first sculpture at the age of 11 from a piece of found granite, ruining his father's wood chisels in the process. "My mother kept heckling me that I should stop all that nonsense and learn an honest trade," Norman, who died in 2009, recalled in the 2007 documentary Emile Norman: By His Own Design. "She didn't know who I was. Never did." But that background schooled him in other ways, and steeled his determination to succeed on his own terms.

But what really set Norman apart in his artistic career was his unlikely medium. According to the late artist's nephew, Carl Malone, who worked alongside Norman in his later life, "He really had quite a love affair with plastics." During World War II, when most metals went to military use, the nascent plastics industry grew as manufacturers looked for alternative materials. So while the Museum of Modern Art remained focused on traditional formats like oil on canvas, Norman was piercing cellulose acetate

with a hot electric needle. A New York World-Telegram article from 1944 called 26-year-old Norman's work with plastic "fascinating." His great innovation, according to a New York Times review published that same year, was freeing plastic from its industrial and commercial uses and putting it to aesthetic ones.

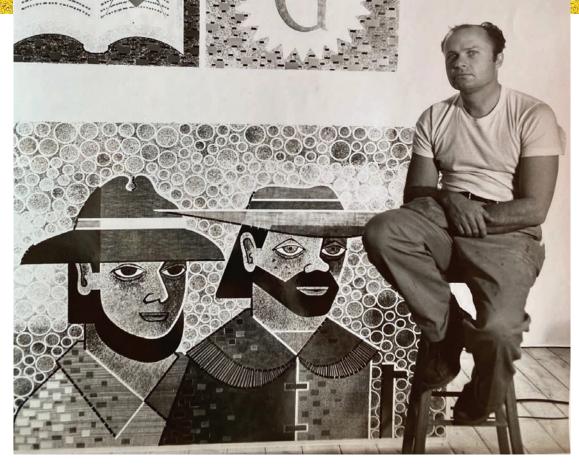
Among his novel creations were fantastical headdresses (some of which appeared in the 1946 film Blue

Emile Norman and Brooks **Clement**, circa 1961.

PHOTOGRAPH BY OUSUF KARSH OURTESY OF EMILE ORMAN ARTS FOUNDATION

Skies) and decorative screens and boxes. Norman filed five patents dealing with the manipulation of plastics. "Every time I do a work of art, I learn something technically and artistically," he said in the documentary. "I'm an experimenter."





Norman in his Big Sur studio with a panel destined for the **CMMT** mural. EMILE NORMAN ARTS FOUNDATION

Although he was candid about his methods, Norman could also be very secretive-for instance, no one was allowed in his studio. He also hid much of his life from the outside world, including his

sexual orientation. At a time when bar raids could end with men's names and addresses in the newspaper, THE RIGHT PLACE, THE RIGHT TIME Norman closely guarded his attraction to men.

That began to change when Norman met Brooks Clement, the man who'd be his partner for the next three decades. In 1946, they moved to Big Sur and began building the house that in some ways would stand as Norman's greatest work of art. In the documentary, Norman recalled clearing the land on Pfei-

ffer Ridge with glee: "That was the butchest part of my life. I loved running that bulldozer," he said. While Norman made his art, Clement ran the Emile Norman Gallery in nearby Carmel, documented their work and research trips, and, according to newspapers of the

time, "managed" Norman's career. Their custombuilt home, with its expansive views of the Pacific, became a gathering place for friends, the starting point for hikes along the surrounding ridges, and the backdrop of their life. Tucked away from the wider world, they were free to build a life together, be open

freeing plastic from its industrial and commercial uses and putting it to aesthetic ones.

about their relationship, and enjoy the embrace of their neighbors.

Beneath their living space was Norman's studio, filled with tools, equipment, and jars of crushed glass, where he sometimes worked 18 hours a day. Over the years, his art included delicate wood-inlay panels he called Nature Poems, carved bas-reliefs, and graceful sculptures of animals created by combining wax, wood fragments, and epoxy. Precursors to the endomosaics appeared in Norman's window displays at places like Bergdorf Goodman in New York, which sometimes included leaves and butterflies pressed between layers of plastic to create shoji-like screens.

Until his death in 1973, Clement continued to assist Norman's work; sometimes the couple signed their collaborative work "Clemile." On

the Masonic endomosaic, Clement's name appears just under Norman's. Today, Norman's work is in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Monterey Museum of Art, but the majority of his output is privately owned. Much of it never left their home. As Will Parrinello, who directed the Norman documentary, points out, "The house is itself a work of art, and it was designed to house his artwork."

It wasn't far from his Big Sur studio that Norman became forever linked to California Freemasonry. In 1954, he created his first endomosaic display for the Casa Munras Hotel in Monterey, depicting the history of the town. There it caught the eye of the modernist architect Albert F. Roller, who earlier that year had won the commission to design the California Masonic Memorial Temple. In 1956, Roller sought out Norman to develop a pair of showstopping works for the temple. (In addition to the endomosaic,



Norman created the large bas-relief frieze on the building's northern face.) For David Wessel of Architectural Resources Group, who led a massive 2006 restoration of the endomosaic, part of what makes the piece special is its integration into the temple's overall design.

Says Wessel, "As a product of the plastics movement that had its genesis during World War II, it's completely appropriate for a midcentury building. The materials, the design, and the placement in the building-everything." Norman had no connection to Freemasonry. To familiarize himself, he dived into the history and symbolism of the fraternity. In 2006, he told California Freemason that he interviewed dozens of members and borrowed

Temple Behind the Window

It isn't just the scale of Emile Norman's endomosaic that makes it special. From its esoteric iconography to its allusions to fraternal and state history, the artwork rewards a closer reading. Here, a few clues. –IAN A. STEWART

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CENTER PANEL

1. Masters of the Lodge

THE SUN AND ALL-SEEING EYE, WITH GRAND LODGE OFFICERS' SYMBOLS

Towering above the mural is the all-seeing eye, a reminder that our actions are seen and judged by others—and that we are accountable to one another. Beneath it are the emblems of the elected officers of the Grand Lodge: the radial sun (representing the grand lecturer); crossed keys (grand treasurer); level (senior grand warden); square and compass with sunburst and quadrant (representing the grand master, the highest-ranking Masonic elected official), the square-and-compass with jewel (deputy grand master), plumb (junior grand warden); and crossed key and pen (grand secretary).

2. The California Freemason

FIGURE WITH APRON, VARIOUS IMAGES

The central figure represents the past, present, and future of California Freemasonry. Surrounding the figure, who wears the Masons' white lambskin apron, are symbols of the state's prominent industries of the 1950s, from wine and logging to shipping and film, depicting the diverse backgrounds and skills of California Masons.

3. The Founders

AMERICAN AND CALIFORNIA FLAGS

Masons have played important roles in the founding of the United States and of California. In fact many of the builders of early California were Freemasons.

4–5. The Settlers

THE WAYFARING MAN AND THE SEAFARING MAN

Representing the earliest American settlers who reached California by land and sea, the figure at left is the wayfarer, who holds a piece of fruit to represent the state's agricultural riches. Behind him are the gold miner, holding a pick, and the trapper, holding a musket. On the right, the seafarer represents the traders who arrived in California in the early 1800s. Behind him are a fisherman and a ship captain, likely representing Levi Stowell, who sailed the charter for **California № 1** from Washington D.C. to San Francisco via the Isthmus of Panama.

see more online

Scan the QR code to learn more about Emile Norman and the story behind his endomosaic masterpiece.

6. Emblems of Masonry

THREE STEPS, POT OF INCENSE, BEEHIVE, AND SWORD

Horizontal bands of images run throughout the mural with esoteric meanings to Masons. Beneath the wayfarer and seafarer, they include three steps, symbolizing the three degrees of Freemasonry; a pot of incense (symbolizing a pure heart); the beehive (representing industry and cooperation); and a sword atop the Constitutions of Freemasonry (guarding Masonic traditions and values).

LEFT PANEL

7. The Celestial Beings STARS, SUN AND MOON, AND SPRIG OF ACACIA

Framing the top of the mural are symbols of the stars, the sun and moon, and the acacia tree. In Masonry, astrological symbols including the sun, moon, and seven stars are used to demonstrate constancy and regularity. The "blazing star" is often used to depict "Masonic light," or knowledge. The sprig of acacia—an evergreen represents the immortality of the soul. The wood from the acacia tree was used in the construction of King Solomon's Temple.

8. The Foundations of Freemasonry PILLARS, TAPERS, ALTAR, BIBLE, AND SUN

A band of Masonic imagery here alludes to some of the most important themes in Freemasonry. They include the twin pillars found at the entrance to King Solomon's Temple, and which are depicted in every Masonic lodge room. Next to that is an image of three burning tapers, representing the "lesser lights" of Freemasonry (the sun, moon, and the master of the lodge). Beside it is the altar, which is a place of communion with the divine. Finally, the holy book (here a Bible) topped by the square and compass represents the three "great lights" of Masonry; while the letter "G" stands for geometry, the foundational science of stonemasonry.

9. Historical Vignettes TRANSPORTATION, EDUCATION, AND EXPANSION

The eight vignettes at left paint a picture of history and progress in California. At the top left is the state capitol, next to images of the automobile, train, and airplane. Both recall Masonry's contributions to the state's government and infrastructure. (In fact, 19 governors of California have been Freemasons.) Beneath them are an image of a schoolhouse and Masonic lodge rooms. The schoolhouse represents the birth of the California public education system, founded by Freemason John Swett. The scenes at bottom left represent the covered wagon that reached California by land. At left is a Native American on horseback, representing the state's first inhabitants and the settling of the frontier.







10. The Degrees of Masonry

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APRON, PILLARS, HANDSHAKE, HOLY WRITING, VESSELS, MOSAIC, STAIRCASE

Square images along the bottom-left of the mural represent icons related to the degrees of Freemasonry. From left, they are the white apron that is given to the new initiate; three columns (representing wisdom, strength, and beauty); and the holy book upon which all members take their oaths. Beside them is a handshake, representing friendship; and vessels of corn, wine, and oil (the wages paid to early stonemasons, now used ceremonially in the consecration of a new building). The Mosaic pavement, tessellated border, and blazing star represent the "ornaments" of the lodge room. The staircase at right is comprised of three, five, and seven steps. The first three steps represent life stages (youth, manhood, old age), followed by the five steps that allude to the five orders of architecture. Finally the seven steps represent the seven liberal arts and sciences (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy).

RIGHT PANEL

11. The Working Tools

24-INCH GAUGE AND COMMON GAVEL, PLUMB, SQUARE, LEVEL, TROWEL

The icons running horizontally across the right-hand panel depict the stonemason's working tools, used allegorically in Freemasonry to illuminate important concepts. From left, they are the common gavel and 24-inch gauge (used metaphorically to divide the 24 hours of the day into useful employment); the plumb (representing uprightness); the square (morality and truth); the level (equality), and trowel (used to spread the "cement of friendship.")

12. More Historical Vignettes

HISTORY AND PROGRESS ON CALIFORNIA'S WATERWAYS

The scenes of sea life depict the Masons' bridge-building efforts that contributed to international trade. Beneath them, four panels illustrate the seafaring industries and the 1846 landing at Monterey by Admiral John Drake Sloat, thought to be the first Mason to arrive in California. At bottom, two panels depict the early schooners that arrived in California by way of the Hawaiian Islands. Some of the first-known Masons to land in California were sea captains like John Meek, who in 1852 became a charter member of the first Masonic lodge in Hawaii.

13. Life Lessons

SWORD AND HEART, ALL-SEEING EYE, ANCHOR, ARK, 47TH PROPOSITION OF EUCLID, HOURGLASS, SCYTHE

Rounding out the bottom panel are more Masonic symbols that allude to teachings contained within the Masonic degrees. From left, they include a depiction of a sword pointed at a naked heart (symbolically, a reminder to guard one's heart against impure thoughts) and the all-seeing eye that's always above us. Next to them are the anchor and ark (symbolizing hope and confidence), and the 47th Proposition of Euclid (used to create a perfect right angle). The final two images, of the winged hourglass and the scythe, represent mortality and the brevity of one's time on earth.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON COVER AND LEFT BY WINNI WINTERMEYER; TOP RIGHT COURTESY OF ARG CONSERVATION SERVICES



Fighting Against the Light

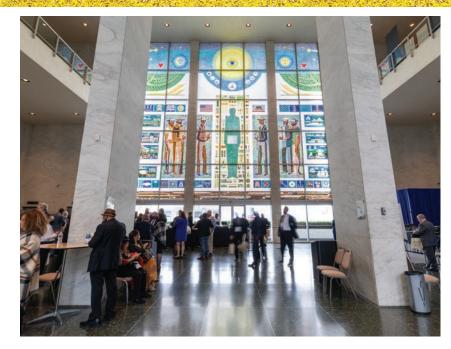
IT STARTED WHEN THE all-seeing eye began to weep. First a little, then more—little bits of the colored glass that gives the massive endomosaic inside the California Masonic Memorial Temple its wonderful texture and hue had come unglued and began to tumble down between the pressed acrylic that frames the work.

Emile Norman's endomosaic process was both ahead of its time and also, in terms of conservation, something of an untested medium. And nearly 50 years after being installed in the California Masonic Memorial Temple, it was beginning to show its age. "These long-chain polymers, which is what acrylics are, do eventually deteriorate from ultraviolet light exposure," explains David Wessel, the principal of Architectural Resources Group. In 2006, his firm was called in to restore and conserve the work—a massive job that ran to nearly half a million dollars.

It was a learning experience for Wessel, who is not a Mason but says he relished the opportunity to learn about the Masonic symbols contained within the artwork. "The iconography is fascinating. My grandfather was a Mason, so I had a little bit of exposure to it. But it's intriguing. It draws you in."

With Norman's blessing and armed with his original instructions for installing the endomosaic, Wessel's team removed each panel individually and took it to their workshop to assess and treat the tessera (the pieces of the mosaic). Once complete, the team reinstalled the panels and installed UV-filtering panels on the exterior to lessen its exposure to the light.

That said, "the artwork needs light coming through it to be appreciated," Wessel says—meaning that over time, it will continue to deteriorate. So as a failsafe, his conservationists took ultra-high-resolution photographs of each panel, so that should the piece ever need to come down, they can develop a transparency to install in its place. Just in case. $\oint -|AS|$



Patrons gather beneath the endomosaic in the main foyer.

books about Masonry from the Grand Lodge to learn about its iconography. The finished work contains depictions of Masonic tools and symbols including the trowel (friendship), the plumb (uprightness), and the all-seeing eye (benevolence), all framing central figures

representing the Masons' contributions to California history. Norman would spend nearly 20 months working on the piece in his home studio. Executed panel by panel with the help of a homemade light table, the 45 sections, each weighing 250 pounds, were trucked up to San Francisco and put into storage until ready for installation.

Much of Norman's other work was on a more human scale, and the endomosaic stands out for its sheer size. "I think the thing that motivated

him the most was doing something he hadn't done before," Malone says of his uncle's approach to the project. Norman's process for the endomosaic differed from typical mosaic-making. Rather than apply bits of glass to an object's surface and cement them with grout, he combined all sorts of materials and pressed them between two layers of clear acrylic. Among those used to color and shade the panels are glass, sea-

ration of the endomosaic artwork. PHOTOGRAPH BY LIZ HAFALIA/GETTY

Emile Norman

at the CMMT in

2005, before a major resto-

shells, foliage, metals, thinly sliced vegetable matter, and soil collected by Masonic lodges in each of California's 58 counties, as well as the Hawaiian Islands (then a part of the Grand Lodge of California).

The result, even when layered between flat planes, has an incredible tactile quality. Like a pointillist painter, Norman combined 180 hues of ground glass that mix optically to create graceful shading. The cohesion of the overall design is immediate. White and black outlines follow the logic of a single light source, the all-seeing eye at the top of the work.

A LEGACY LIVES ON

Despite the triumph of the endomosaic, which is seen and photographed by thousands of visitors each year, Emile Norman's name has never been widely known beyond a small group of collectors. According to Parrinello, whose documentary is streaming on Kanopy, there was a moment in the early 1960s, when Norman was back east, that he could have pursued a career with a

New York gallery. Instead, he opted to return to Big Sur to pursue his art on his own terms.

Before Norman died in 2009, he laid out plans for a trust to protect both his home and his art. But in 2020, bankruptcy proceedings forced Norman's house onto the market, prompting local fears of demolitionan irreparable loss to the artistic heritage of Big Sur. Thankfully, the home, its artworks, and the 40 acres of land surrounding it were purchased by the newly formed Emile Norman Arts Foundation, funded by a silent benefactor. Heather Chappellet Lanier, Kim Stemler, and Heather Engen, the trio of Big Sur residents behind the foundation, are now working to bring Norman's art to a wider audience.

In a home assembled over decades with love and care, the markers of Norman and Clement's personal and professional accomplishments are finally secure. There are traces of their crowning achievement throughout the space: a scale model of the Masonic endomosaic, a life-size test panel mounted within a door, and dozens of glass jars full of soil from Masonic lodges. "It meant a lot to him, and he kept that part of his life there," Parrinello says.

It was that dedication to his work that drew Parrinello to Norman. The filmmaker remembers their first meeting: "He said things like, 'You know, no one's ever going to give you permission to do what you want except for yourself. So what are you waiting for?" Parrinello says. "That's how he lived his life." 🚸



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Foundation). And, with its planned exhibition hall and performance venue, it would become a fixture of the city's business and entertainment scene-a draw for visitors and Masons alike. In that way, it would be a boon to the economic interests of Nob Hill and downtown San Francisco beyond.

Given that backdrop, it's interesting to note that the location on the corner of California and Taylor streets wasn't the first choice for the new temple. Following the 1947 report, a committee devoted to the search for a new home identified 15 different sites in San Francisco to develop or refurbish. Ultimately, none of them were deemed suitable.

In early 1952, the committee identified a promising 12-story property at 201 Sansome, at the corner of Pine, owned by the San Francisco Stock Exchange and known as the Sub-Treasury Building. However, negotiations over the \$3,000,000 sale fell through; meanwhile, a January 1952 arson at the Van Ness temple caused more than \$100,000 in damages. Suddenly, the committee was under pressure to find a new home, fast. ("Make haste slowly" had been its winking motto.) After looking at several additional properties, in 1953 the committee turned its attention to the southwest corner of California and Taylor. The location, which at the time included a gas station

The modernist venue at 1111 was finally finished in spring 1958, and dedicated later that fall.



and a four-story apartment building, stood opposite the in-progress Grace Cathedral and the Huntington Hotel. The 50,000-square-foot property had frontage on three streets—California, Taylor, and Pine—and was served by the California Street cable car line.

There were several obstacles to developing the Nob Hill site. First, it was zoned for residential use; second, it was expensive. To pay for the land, as well as the costs of constructing and operating the building, the Grand Lodge would have to build a temple with income-generating capability. However, zoning on Nob Hill wouldn't allow for retail storefronts, which had helped subsidize the Van Ness temple.

Street parking was already at a premium in the neighborhood, especially with numerous hotels and apartment buildings nearby. Therefore, a five-level parking garage capable of accommodating over 500 vehicles became part of the building program. At the same time, the hotels provided opportunities for synergy. Many business conventions and trade shows had outgrown hotel ballrooms after the war, and the decision to include a large exhibition hall in the building's design was probably made in consultation with the Fairmont Hotel owner Benjamin Swig, of Lincoln № 470 in San Francisco. Swig, a major booster of the convention industry in the city,

California Street

certainly would have approved of having an exhibition hall only a block from his flagship hotel. Another member of the temple committee certainly did: Walter Swanson, of **Educator № 554**, was manager of the San Francisco Convention and Tourist Bureau.

Financing the project proved to be a tall order. The price of land for the site came to \$1.3 million; plans for construction, including excavating the 62-foot drop from California Street south along Taylor, would come to more than \$6 million. Two ideas for raising capital came to the fore: First, a 50-cent per capita fee that had been introduced in 1951 was raised to \$1 per year in 1952; another \$9 fee for new applicants was also directed toward building costs. Separately, a fundraising drive, initiated by Ernest Bashor, the chairman of the Masonic Homes Endowment Board, called on all members to contribute the equivalent of "one day's wages"-what came out to \$9 per member—to the project. The names of each contributing member and lodge would be recorded in a public "open book," to be put on display inside the memorial lounge. (Today that book is kept under glass on the mezzanine level.)

A MODERNIST MARVEL

Meanwhile, architect Albert Roller got to work. Roller, who was a member of **Excelsior № 166**, ably adapted the Masons' vision to the site, placing the five-level parking garage within the building podium, or reinforced base level, which also contained the exhibition hall on the ground floor. The first floor, accessible by California Street, would serve as the

Artist Emile Norman's memorial frieze on the building's exterior represents the branches of the armed forces and the struggle of good and evil.

building's primary public access point, containing the 50-by-112-foot foyer and the 3,200-seat auditorium. Most of the second floor would be taken up by the auditorium's mezzanine and the upper part of

The temple committee stipulated that the temple's design philosophy would evince "no stylized tradition or cliché," in order to stand as a timeless monument.

the foyer. The remainder was set aside for a library and an apartment for the grand master. Meanwhile, the third floor would house an office suite for the staff of the Grand Lodge, Masonic Homes, and other Masonic organizations.

In February 1954, Albert Roller finished his preliminary designs. However, construction did not begin for another 20 months, as construction and fundraising

delays pushed back the groundbreaking. The standing apartment house and gas station were finally demolished in January 1956, and excavation and construction followed a few weeks later. The contractor was MacDonald, Young & Nelson.

The temple committee stipulated that the temple's design philosophy should evince "no stylized tradition or cliché," in order to stand as a timeless monument. Roller designed the new building's exterior in a sleek, modernist vocabulary that embodied influences of the "stripped classical" style of the 1930s. The exterior departs from the sometimes arid modernism of the 1950s. The only applied ornament was a memorial frieze by the late artist Emile Norman that, in keeping with the rest of the temple design, is reminiscent of New Deal-era aesthetics. At the left side are four panels depicting men from

> each of the branches of the armed forces, shown in ageless dress. At the right is a panel depicting a tug of war between the forces of good and evil, democracy and totalitarianism, with an inscription that reads: "Dedicated to Our Masonic Brethren Who Died in the Cause of Freedom."

Beneath the frieze is a planter bed containing soil taken from each of California's 58 counties and each of the Hawaiian Islands. (Hawaii fell under the Masonic jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of California until 1989.) The bed contains a row of ornamental olive trees.

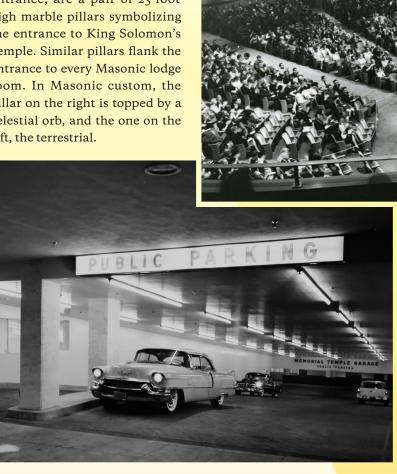
At the opposite end of the primary façade is the entrance porch. The porch roof is supported by a colonnade of squared-off columns made from Vermont marble, the same material used in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. At the rear of the porch, flanking the entrance, are a pair of 23-foothigh marble pillars symbolizing the entrance to King Solomon's Temple. Similar pillars flank the entrance to every Masonic lodge room. In Masonic custom, the pillar on the right is topped by a celestial orb, and the one on the left, the terrestrial.



The first-floor foyer is accessed from the entrance porch. The first thing you see upon entering the building is the stunning endomosaic window. Designed and executed by Norman, the window is made of thousands of pieces of colored glass sandwiched between layers of acrylic. The window comprises three sections, each divided into 15 panels, depicting the history of Masonry in California.

COMING TOGETHER

Finally, on October 27, 1955, more than 2,500 Masons attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the temple, as Grand Master Henry C. Clausen turned over a ceremonial spadeful of earth after ritually





pouring corn, oil, and wine onto the ground. San Francisco mayor Elmer Robinson, a fellow Mason, declared the occasion "another great day in the history of San Francisco and the history of Masonry in California."

Construction on the new temple was slow and frequently delayed. Strikes by the carpenters union and in the steel industry caused further slowdowns, and construction was halted on May 9, 1956, when a cave-in buried two workers, killing one. (The other,

Kenneth Archer, was rescued after three hours.) Fundraising for the project also proved difficult. The Grand Lodge had vowed not to borrow from the Masonic Homes endowment fund, meaning that members would be responsible for repaying all building costs. In 1954, Grand Master Frank Harwell wrote in the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of the new temple's long-delayed opening, "There is only one major unsettled question: When? The answer to that is very simple. When the Masons of California and the Hawaiian Islands provide the money. The process can be long or short. It is easily within your power to make it short." Under the "one day's wages" theme, 123,890 members joined the "merit roll" of donors by the building's opening. Some 457 lodges also received "merit

Above: The San Francisco Symphony performs in the first concert inside the auditorium on April 19, 1958.

Left: An undated photo shows a car exiting the 500-car parking garage.

roll" status. In 1954, those contributions totaled more than \$700,000; in 1957, fundraising topped out at \$1.7 million (about \$18 million today).

Despite the delays, construction did inch along. The cornerstone of the temple was dedicated in October 1956 and the building frame topped out in April 1957. Six months later, the marble cladding on the exterior was in place. Writing in the 1957 Proceedings, Grand Master L. Harold Anderson marveled at the sight of the building rounding into shape.

"Hardly a day has passed since construction was started that I have not gone to the top of Nob Hill to watch the workmen at their labors," he wrote. "I saw it as a mighty steel frame, showing the strength and mighty sinews of California Freemasonry. Then they poured the cement that united the structure into a common mass. And finally, as you will now see it, they adorned the Temple with beauty by applying the white Vermont marble slabs that face the building.... Brethren, a part of that building is mine. And even in its unfinished state it is among my most treasured possessions, because it is not something I have bought, but something I have given. I hope every California Master Mason will be able to look upon the California Masonic Memorial Temple with the same pride and sense of ownership."

By April 1958, the interior was at last complete. However, the temple was not formally opened until the fall Annual Communication. The official dedication took place on September 29, 1958. Grand Master Leo Anderson presided over the ceremony, which was attended by Masonic dignitaries from 33 states and 11 countries. "This is our new home," Anderson proclaimed, "a thing of beauty, a living testimonial to the strength and vitality of our great fraternity." Fittingly, the first Masonic event held in the new temple wasn't a ritual performance or even lodge business, but rather a meeting to discuss charity: On August 21, 1958, more than 1,200 Bay Area lodge officers gathered in the auditorium to discuss plans for Public Schools Week events that year.

FOR ALL TIME

For nearly 65 years, the California Masonic Memorial Temple has dutifully served the needs of California's Masons. Its income-producing components, including the parking garage, the exhibition hall, and the auditorium, have helped sustain the Grand Lodge, and revenues generated through them have supported the California Masonic Foundation. They've



Above: A circa 1960s trade show inside the exhibition hall.

Right: In this undated photo, the Girl Scouts of America hold their annual convention inside the auditorium.

Below: Chronicle columnist Herb **Caen and actress Ruth Roman** pose at the 1965 **International Film** Festival in the temple auditorium



B

also made the temple a central component of San Francisco's cultural life. The Masonic auditorium has hosted thousands of concerts by the likes of Barbra Streisand, Bob Dylan, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, and many others. In 2010, the national concert promoter Live Nation took over management of the facility, and in 2014 it upgraded the auditorium, enlarging it to a capacity of 3,300.

The exterior of the building remains nearly unchanged, although in 1996 the Grand Lodge renovated meeting spaces on the exhibition level and relocated the library and museum there, at the corner of Taylor and California streets. In 2008, the library was moved back to the mezzanine level, and the vacated space was renamed the California Room.

The most significant change to the building's interior came in 2019, when a different portion of the exhibition hall space was remodeled to include an intimate Masonic lodge room called Freemasons' Hall, as well as an adjoining library, lounge, dining area, and bar. (For more, see page 28.) Today, eight different Masonic groups rent the space for their monthly meetings, including some that are not affiliated with the Grand Lodge of California. Now, for the first time since 1958, Masons have a place to practice the ritual, raise fellow Masons, and meet as brothers within the home of California Freemasonry. The opening of Freemasons' Hall may represent the building's most consequential physical transformation to date, but it isn't the only way in which the temple has evolved. This year, as part of the fraternity's latest five-year operating plan, there's a new emphasis







on utilizing the temple to tell the story of California Freemasonry to the public. That means activating communal spaces, including the entrance porch, the endomosaic window, and the California Street exterior, with signage and digital access that allows curious passers-by and onlookers to learn more about the building's history, its uses, and its meaning. Other pro-

The California **Masonic Memorial Temple remains** firmly rooted in place, ready to serve the needs of the fraternity—and the community-for vears to come.

gramming is being developed that will allow the fraternity to tap into its most visible-and importantasset to help usher a new generation into the centuries-old tradition.

The California Masonic Memorial Temple stands as a testimony to the foresight of its builders. Over time, the public-facing elements of the temple have allowed it to thrive even as membership in the fraternity nationwide has declined by 75

percent. Now there's evidence that the decades-long drop in membership is bottoming out, and that interest among millennials might reverse the trend. If so, the California Masonic Memorial Temple remains firmly rooted in place, ready to serve the needs of the fraternity—and the community—for years to come.

Writing about his hopes for the yet-to-be-built temple in 1953, Ernest Bashor, whose "one day's labor" call helped fund construction and instilled a sense of shared ownership in the structure, summed up his feelings neatly. "We are now confronted with the desire and deep determination that a real monument may be established ... one that will be useful for present-day activities, and one that will stand the ravages of time and forever be for our children and our children's children a commanding landmark, and an inspiration to all Masons and the public at large."



Learn more about the California Masonic Memorial Temple, including a time-lapse of the building's construction, at freemason.org/cmmt



Temple

Inside Freemasons' Hall, a collision of the past and future of Masonic lodges.

BY LEILANI MARIE LABONG

WHEN ARCHITECT KEVIN HACKETT was approached about creating a new lodge hall to be housed inside the California Masonic Memorial Temple in San Francisco, his design inspiration came from another age and place. In Britain and Europe, lodges for centuries met in small, cramped spaces either inside, above, or sometimes beneath neighborhood bars and taverns-a practice that lasted until the middle of the 20th century, in many cases.

It therefore seemed appropriate that the only space available for the new lodge room in San Francisco was a corner of the windowless exhibition hall directly beneath the Masonic auditorium, a thundering Live Nation music venue. "Once you choose an esoteric route in life, you end up in some really interesting spaces," jokes Hackett, the co-founder and principal of the San Francisco design studio Síol and a member of Logos № 871 and Mission № 169.

Five years later, the new Freemasons' Hall is the meeting place of no fewer than eight Masonic lodges, including Hackett's Logos № 871. And far from being some dank bar basement, the lodge room is a triumphant blend of rich midcentury aesthetics (clean lines, brass detailing, organic materials) and timeless classicism (marble columns, stepped wooden moldings). But even amid such elevated trappings, the spirit of those bygone gatherings in humble watering holes prevails. To Hackett and others, the result

The interior of the new Freemasons' Hall, inside the California Masonic Memorial Temple, is a blend of midcentury aesthetics and timeless classicism

Below: Members including designer Kevin Hackett (second from left) celebrate a festive board at Freemasons' Hall. Bottom: The library and lounge area outside the lodge room invite members to stay a while.





points to the next step for lodges in California: small, special, and endlessly meaningful. "When bigger lodges splinter into more intimate groups, that will be the evolution of Freemasonry," Hackett says. Here, the architect gives a tour of California's first "urban microlodge."

SOCIAL STUDY

Inherently cozy owing to its interior location in the building, Freemasons' Hall has a maximum capacity of just 50 people. Accessing the lodge hall requires passing through an adjacent lounge, library, and gathering space, well-appointed with marble columns, channel-tufted velvet sofas, and framed portraits of past grand masters. The handsome library is stacked with Masonic texts, and a central hearth is marked by a mounted sculpture of the Masonic handshake.



V

Above: The Freemasons' Hall lounge area and hearth features a mounted sculpture of shaking hands, recovered from the Grand Lodge temple that burned in the 1906 fire. Left: Members play cards in the library.



THE BIG G

Hackett's entrée into Masonry came through the fraternity's historic connection to builders like himself. "They talk about [building] symbolically all the time," he says. His lodge design pays homage to that tradition. A pentagon-shaped altar, cut from Italian Carrara marble, represents the spiral creation from the golden ratio. Custom brass screens contain concentric shapes—a circle, triangle, and square exemplifying oneness among the soul, spirit, and body. French oak stepped molding, also installed throughout the lodge, references the philosophy "as above, so below," and suggests the duality in engineering between tension and polarity-key in the construction of the pyramids. Even the temple's barrel-vaulted ceiling is a nod to ancient crypts like the Parisian catacombs and Rome's Mithraic temple ruins.



Above: Members pose in front of the eastern "dawn wall." A pentagonal altar, visible at the bottom of the photo, is cut from Italian Carrara marble

THE DAWN WALL

The theatrically illuminated sculpture on the temple's east wall may bring to mind a glowing white moon but in fact reflects the rising sun. Meanwhile, the textural gradient of the marble is a nod to Masons' lifelong work perfecting the rough ashlar to polished stone. Achieving the effect required a range of tools and techniques from Los Angeles stonemason Nathan Hunt, including a hand-point chisel, bush hammer, and sandblaster.

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

The lodge room's location under one of San Francisco's major concert venues posed a challenge to the quiet and contemplative nature of Masonic rituals. Acoustical engineer Charles Salter masterfully decreased the decibels using a combination of strategies, from 24-inch-thick walls with sound-absorbing air gaps to double-layered acoustic Sheetrock. Even the full-height tufted-leather banquettes built along the perimeter of the temple contribute to soundproofing. The result is that a person speaking in hushed tones can be clearly heard by others around the space, their faint echo lending a reverential air to the proceedings. "In rituals, you're repeating words that were said centuries ago and never written down," Hackett explains. "There's a lot of power in the oral tradition of the Freemasons." 🚸



A Temple on the Hill IN UNION CITY. THE SIMINOFF MASONIC LODGE HAS A HISTORY GOING **BACK GENERATIONS.** BY IAN A STEWART

EVEN FOR A FAMILY whose connection with Masonry goes back generations, one day stands out in the Adamsons' long tenure. It was early 2008, and Larry Adamson was several months into his term as grand master of California. Together with his brother Richard, he'd traveled to the Masonic Homes campus in Union City, where their father, Doc, lived with their mother. That day, Larry Adamson would lead the installation of their dad as the new master of **Siminoff Daylight Nº 850**, surrounded by family and hundreds of their closest friends, neighbors, and Masonic brothers.

"My father wasn't a real talkative guy, but that day he looked at me and said, 'Thank you for doing this," Larry Adamson recalls. "That was a special moment for me, and probably the most sincere moment I ever had with him."

FIFTY-SIX PANELS

OF BRIGHTLY

STAINED GLASS

WRAP AROUND THE SIMINOFF

CENTER AT THE

MASONIC HOMES IN UNION CITY.

PHOTO BY MARTIN KLIMEK

COLORED

It wasn't just the familial nature of the moment that made it special, Adamson says. It was also the setting. Before they passed away, Adamson's parents lived at the Masonic Homes for nearly a

Below: The textual gradient of the wall recalls the transition from rough to smooth stone



dozen years. As a result, the Homes remain deeply important to the family-so much so that Adamson later became chairman of its board, partly out of gratitude for his parents' treatment there. There, in the Siminoff lodge room, which had hosted special Masonic events for more than 100 years, the family was able to celebrate not just a father and his sons, but generations spent in Freemasonry.

A HISTORIC HOME

Bathed in the colored light of its stained-glass windows and surrounded by Masonic antiques and relics going back to the earliest days of the fraternity, the Siminoff lodge room in Union City is one of the most important places in California Masonry-and one where that feeling of tradition is palpable.

The history of the lodge room in Union City goes back almost to the founding of the campus itself. Just four years after the first residents were admitted to the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home in Decoto, as it was originally called (using the earlier



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name for Union City), a wealthy Bay Area Freemason named Morris Siminoff presented a gift of \$30,000—more than \$1 million in today's dollars—to erect a Masonic temple on its grounds. Siminoff, a Russian immigrant who'd become a successful textile manufacturer in the Bay Area, was a member of Fidelity № 120 in San Francisco as well as belonging to each of the chapters of the Scottish Rite. Not much else is known about Siminoff, although at one point he is recorded as having donated a shipment of coats and cloaks for the young orphans who originally lived at the Decoto Home. Tragically, he died suddenly in 1907, at the age of 44, likely a result of injuries suffered falling off a horse during a parade of the Knights Templar in San Francisco.

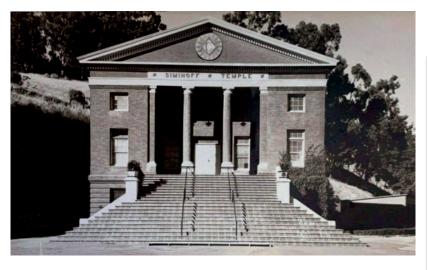
Siminoff's gift, made alongside his wife, Emma, paid for the construction of a "splendid temple" (as it was described by grand master at the time) of brick and stone. The temple contained the lodge room, an assembly hall, and 16 new rooms for elderly residents. The addition of those rooms allowed the home to convert a former dormitory into its first widows' quarters. (At the time, women and men were housed separately.) The donation also funded the installation of a 350-pipe, electric-powered organ.

The cornerstone for Siminoff Temple was laid on April 22, 1903; six months later, the building was formally dedicated by Grand Master Orrin S. Henderson. More than 3,000 Masons made the trip to the East Bay hills to witness the event. On November 14,

Eucalyptus Nº 243 of first Masonic degree inside the temple; in subsequent months, Sequoia № 349 of Oakland and Alameda **№** 167 of Centerville (now part of Fremont) would use it for thirddegree conferrals.

Hayward conferred the "It's really an experience. lt's an experience to go and see the history that's there."

Yet for more than 100 years, no lodge permanently called the temple home. That wasn't the original plan: In the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge in 1903, Grand Master Henderson "endorsed and advocated for the many advantages, too numerous to mention, that are to be derived" by forming a lodge at the home. He even went so far as to suggest a name: Preston Lodge, in honor of Past Grand Master Edwin Preston (1895), who had died earlier that year.



EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE ORIGI-NAL, CIRCA-1903 SIMINOFF TEMPLE IN UNION CITY. THE TEMPLE WAS SHUTTERED IN 1976 AND REBUILT AS THE SIMINOFF CENTER IN 1989. HENRY W. COIL LIBRARY AND

MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY

It's unclear why that lodge never came into being, but for more than a century, Siminoff Temple remained a sort of Masonic home away from home, with nearby lodges using it to host special events or degree conferrals, but no group meeting regularly there. By 1976, the temple had fallen into disrepair and was shuttered by state officials for failing to meet earthquake-safety standards.

A NEW LODGE IS BORN

For the next decade, the campus was without a Masonic lodge entirely, culminating in the demolition of the original temple in 1986. That same year, though, an ambitious new construction plan for the Masonic Homes brought the old temple back to life—sort of. As part of a \$16 million development that included the construction of the 120-bed skilled-nursing facility named for benefactor Hugo Lorber, plans included building a new Masonic lodge room, to be housed alongside the campus chapel. Ground was broken on the project in 1987, and the new Siminoff Center, comprising the lodge room, foyer, and chapel, was dedicated by grand lodge officers on May 7, 1989.

The new facility was built from scratch, but designers went to lengths to include elements of the original Siminoff Temple in its design. Bricks from the 1903 temple were salvaged to construct the face of the new building, while the original altar was repurposed and reconditioned. Even the elaborate gas-powered chandelier that had once hung in the temple's entryway was refurbished and made electric. It now hangs above the lodge room.

However, the design flourish that commands the most attention is the expansive set of stained-glass windows. Each of the 56 panels, measuring 4 by 4.5 feet, was fabricated by Judson Studios, the oldest family-run stained-glass maker in the country, and depict Masonic symbols including the square,

plumb, and anchor. In addition to being so near the Masonic Homes' chapel room, the colored windows lend the lodge room a special feeling of reverence.

Despite having a brand-new space available, it wasn't until 2006 that the first seeds of a permanent lodge finally began to flower. That year, a degree team comprised of Masonic Homes residents began meeting and practicing on campus. The team performed for several lodges in the Bay Area, "contributing where we could and sharing our expertise," according to Bobby Joe McCain, one of the original members of the group.

Recognizing an opportunity to make real a dream that at that point had been 103 years in the making, the Grand Lodge in 2006 issued a dispensation to Siminoff Daylight U.D., and on October 6, 2007, the lodge received its formal charter—the day before ground was broken at the neighboring Acacia Creek Retirement Community.

In the 15 years since, the lodge has grown from an initial group of 67 to a lodge of 105 members today, including master Joseph Pritchard, who is also the chief operating officer of the Masonic Homes. The lodge isn't just for residents, either: Just over 40 percent of the members now live off campus. And another dozen members are residents of Acacia Creek who had not previously been Masons-meaning the lodge has more than a few 50-year veterans, as well as several newbies. For many of those members, it's the lodge building itself that inspired their initial curiosity about Freemasonry. Says McCain, "I think we have a very impressive-looking lodge room. It's quite a draw."

McCain points for emphasis to the pair of handpainted murals by John Dahle Jr., a member of the lodge and Masonic Homes resident who has worked for years as a commercial artist. The murals on the north and south walls depict scenes from the building of King Solomon's temple and feature old west typography, echoing the large mural he painted several years ago in his home lodge, Nevada № 13. "They're gorgeous," McCain says of the twin artworks. "They both incorporate a lot of the teachings of Freemasonry. They're more than just a piece of artwork in the building."

To Adamson, who as a member of the Masonic Homes board visits the Siminoff lodge often, the space still holds a special place in his heart. "It's a beautiful complex," he says. "But it's not just that. It's really an experience. It's an experience to go and see the history that's there." 🚸



Mark Pressey

MEMBER SINCE 1993 IRVINE VALLEY № 671 • VISTA № 687 THE THIRTY-THREE № 878 COLUMBIA HISTORIC № 2029

California Freemason: As chairman of the California Masonic Memorial Temple board, what do you find especially meaningful about the building? **Mark Pressey:** Besides being a wonderful building that supports the charitable efforts of the California Masonic Foundation, I love how it also serves as a war memorial. My father served in WWII, and his father became a Mason around the time the CMMT was being built. It was a great honor for him make a donation and see it get constructed. Whenever I enter the Grand Lodge, I can feel what my grandfather felt then, and it's something I'll never forget.

CFM: What's your favorite thing about the CMMT? **MP:** Walking into any lodge, there's this great energy where everyone greets you and you all catch up. That energy is multiplied a hundredfold when I go to Annual Communication. The building really is a shared experience and a shared history for all of us in the fraternity.

CFM: What can other lodges learn from the CMMT about using their halls to tell the story of Freemasonry to the public? **MP:** We hope people see the CMMT and Freemasons' Hall as an example of how

to renovate their own lodge space to make them

relevant for the next generation. We're adding QR

codes around the building, which will link visitors

to information about the building as well as about

the history of California Freemasonry. We hope this

gives lodges some ideas to take home and pursue in

CFM: Any other favorite memories of the building?

MP: When I was a young parent, I remember push-

ing my son in a stroller up Taylor Street, the steep

hill that leads to the building. My thighs were burn-

ing, but I really wanted him to experience coming

into Grand Lodge there. 🚸 —JUSTIN JAPITANA

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