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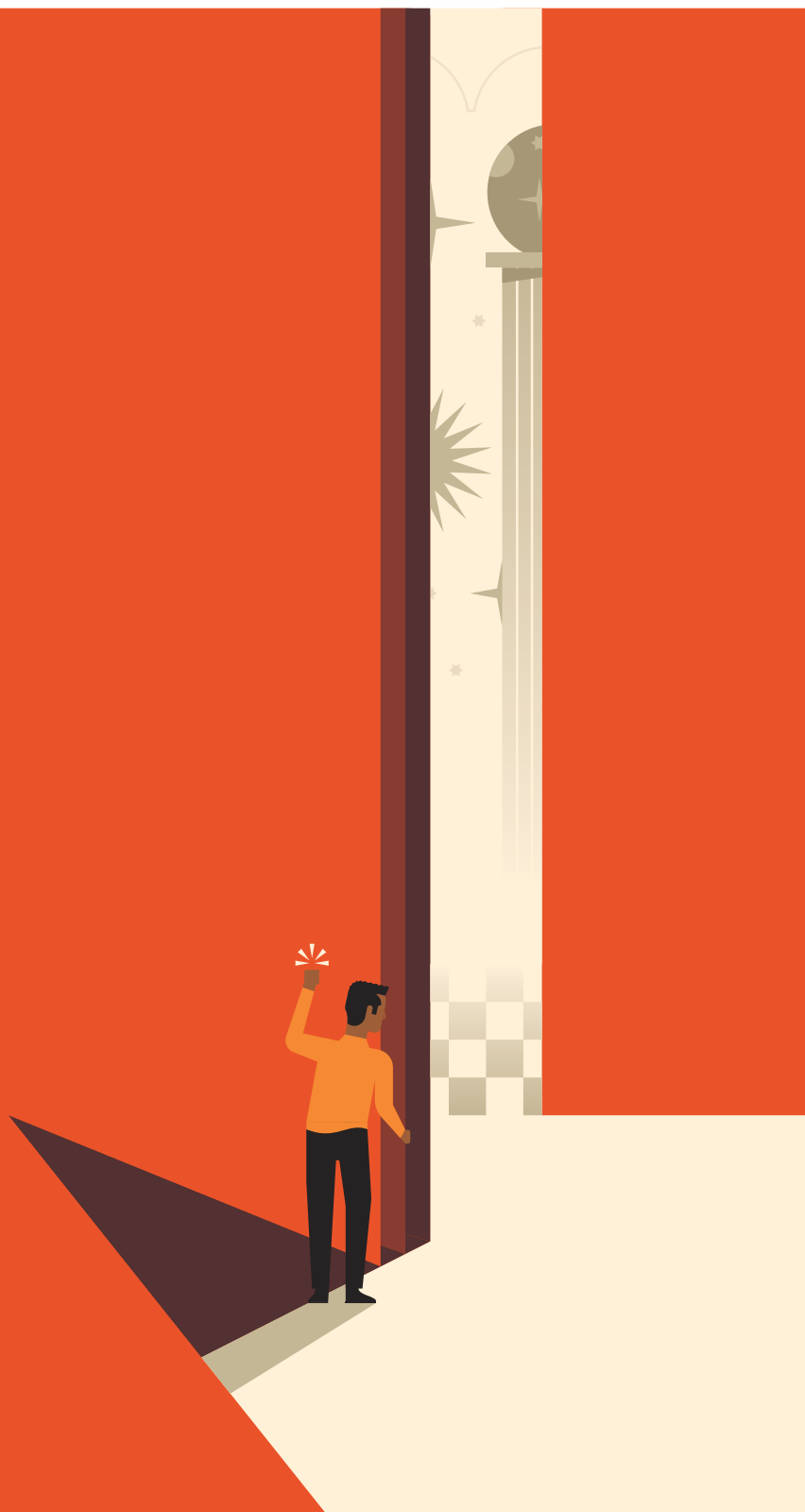


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CALIFORNIA

FREEMASON

THE
PROSPECT
EXPERIENCE



CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

NOVEMBER DECEMBER

2017 VOL 66 NO 01



THIS ISSUE'S COVER DEPICTS THE SENSE OF ANTICIPATION A PROSPECTIVE MASON HAS WHEN HE FIRST OPENS THE DOOR TO FREEMASONRY AND HAS AN INKLING OF THE EXPERIENCES AWAITING HIM. THE ALTERNATE COVER, SHOWN HERE, USES THE VINTAGE MEDIUM OF NEWSPAPER "WANTED" ADS TO DISPLAY THE TWINNED DESIRES OF MEN SEEKING A MORE ENLIGHTENED EXISTENCE AND LODGES ENCOURAGING GOOD MEN TO FIND MASONRY.

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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Grand Master Bruce R. Galloway offers guidance for welcoming new brothers who are also great friends.

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WHAT GOOD MEN SEEK

What draws prospective members to Freemasonry? Here, brothers share what they were looking for in the fraternity.

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WHY I BECAME A MASON

Past Grand Master John L. Cooper III reflects upon his personal journey in Masonry — how he came to the fraternity and what he's learned thus far.



THE MEN WHO MIGHT BE MASONS

Gone are the days when California lodges strived for sheer numbers. The emphasis is now on quality: The traits and experiences that make a member worthy. How do lodges identify these traits? How can they encourage the right experiences? And, what does it feel like to be one of the men seeking answers in today's fraternity?

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One Los Angeles-area lodge proves that intimate member experiences and deep friendships are the backbone of a thriving brotherhood.

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David Johnson has never met a stranger — a talent he puts to good use for California Masonry. Over the years, he's struck up lifelong friendships and drawn lost brothers back into the fold.



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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

WELCOMING OUR NEW BROTHERS

When speaking of Freemasonry, we often say that we make good men better. For hundreds of years, this statement has rung true. We have welcomed men with a genuine desire to improve themselves and their communities, and with the support of Freemasonry, they have. Our history books and memories contain countless examples.

As today's stewards of Freemasonry, it is our responsibility to ensure that this tradition endures. In the same way that we envision future members' development, we must consider the evolution of our lodges and fraternity. The brothers we welcome must be good men who will complement our lodge and Freemasonry — those who bring diversity, fresh perspectives, insight, and enthusiasm; who are as prepared to make a lasting impact in our lives as we are to make in theirs.

We should know each prospect, and he should know us, long before an application is extended. We should understand why he wants to be a Mason, and he should be familiar with Freemasonry and the culture of our lodge. We can accomplish this by warmly welcoming prospects; by introducing them to our members and families; by encouraging and valuing their participation in lodge activities. In other words, we must develop a friend whom we will be excited to call a brother: a brother who will certainly become a friend.




Bruce R. Galloway, Grand Master

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Phone: (800) 831-8170 or
(415) 776-7000
fax: (415) 776-7170
email: editor@freemason.org

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What Good Men Seek

EACH MAN COMES TO FREEMASONRY IN HIS OWN WAY. PROSPECTIVE MASONS SHARE WHY THEY CAME TO MASONRY AND WHAT THEY HOPE TO GAIN.

"I wanted to be part of something bigger than any individual. I'm hoping to gain the tools I need to become a better person and be part of the brotherhood."
—Sergio Guerrero

"I am hoping to gain leadership skills, create new and lasting friendships, and finally walk the path of many of our founding fathers."
—Brandon Hamilton

"My grandfather was a very important part of my life growing up and stressed how meaningful Masonry was for him. He always said that Masonry made him a better man. I am looking to be a better father, husband, and brother." —Benjamin Lane Barnett

"I want to be accepted without prejudice and learn things that will help me better myself. Also, to mentor my new brothers, drawing on the leadership skills I learned from my 26 years in the U.S. Army."
—Lyndon Delago

"I came to find a new direction and a new guide for my life; an honest way to help people I will meet and who live around me."
—Alexis Kalombo Baloji

"I heard about Masonry and was intrigued. I wanted to learn more about its culture."
—Don Mabunga

"I discovered a group of men who made me feel that I was wanted. My lodge is special and they made me want to belong. They are bright and interesting; friendly and engaging. I learn something new about life every week." —Sheldon Ascher

"Masonry offers an incredible international support network, which will mentor me and help me grow as I navigate my life." —Paul Harrison

"I wanted to be part of an organization that's helping surrounding communities."
—Ruben Lerma

"I am hoping to gain a much clearer perspective in life, and the world at large, via the lessons and teachings of Freemasonry!"
—Roland Joseph Arostegul

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MASONIC EDUCATION

Why I Became a Mason

THE PROMISE OF FREEMASONRY INSPIRED A LIFE DEVOTED TO ITS CRAFT

By John L. Cooper III, Past Grand Master

This personal account of my Masonic education is my way of sharing some of the reasons that motivated me to become a Freemason, and the difference it has made since I first knocked at the door of a Masonic lodge on May 28, 1964.

The journey to becoming a Mason sometimes begins much earlier than we may think, and that journey may well begin, as it did for me, in the Masonic youth order of DeMolay. A respected elder in the First Christian Church at Fullerton asked me one day, "Have you ever heard about the Order of DeMolay?" I didn't know anything about DeMolay, much less about Freemasonry or other Masonic organizations. (Although my paternal grandfather had been a Mason, he died when I was six years old.) Freemasonry has a rule against asking anyone to become a Mason, but that restriction does not apply to talking to young men about DeMolay or inviting them to consider joining. As a 15-year-old young man, I was intrigued by DeMolay as an organization, and by the promise it presented to me.

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THE ROUGH
AND PERFECT
ASHLARS BECAME
MORE THAN
MASONIC SYMBOLS:
THEY BECAME
AN IDEAL
OF PERSONAL
PROGRESS



Had the elder never asked me about the young men's fraternity, I likely would never have discovered DeMolay, and probably would never have become a Freemason. And, despite how greatly I valued my experience in DeMolay, this membership probably would not have inspired me to seek to become a Mason, had it not been for those mentors who made up our chapter advisory council and the examples they set for me. Beyond being great advisors for our chapter, they were men whose lives reflected the principles I valued. They were the kind of men that I wished to become as an adult. Today, so many years later, they have continued to influence my life. And because of them, at the age of 21 — then the minimum age to ask to be a Mason — I petitioned a lodge for the degrees of Masonry.

My journey in Freemasonry has been enabled and empowered by Masons who genuinely understood what Freemasonry represents and is capable of. They pointed me toward resources through which I could learn more about this amazing and ancient organization, and encouraged me to study its teachings and history. I soon found that the more I learned, the more there was to learn, and early on I formed a habit — which I still have — to try to learn and understand something new every day. Freemasonry became a journey into gaining knowledge of myself beyond just learning more about Freemasonry itself. The more I came to understand the impact of the teachings of Freemasonry on my life, the more I was empowered to be successful in my chosen endeavors. The rough

and perfect ashlar became more than Masonic symbols: They became an ideal of personal progress; a way of understanding that we can be better tomorrow than we are today. It is the idea of *growth* that these two symbols represent, and growth in knowledge and understanding became a passion for me.

The teachings of Freemasonry also shaped my understand-

ing of the world of knowledge outside of the craft. Never satisfied with what I already knew, learning new things became a driving force for me in all aspects of my life. I found that a university education was not an end in itself, but the door to a lifelong commitment to learning more every passing year. Along the way, I met Masons who shared a similar passion, and many of these brothers are still the ones from whom I learn about Freemasonry in general, and about life. They truly became "friends and brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, except that noble contention, or rather emulation, of best can work and best agree." The Masonic ideal is one in which we respect one another for our achievements, but without the destructive behavior so often seen outside the

fraternity, where competition can undermine friendship.

Freemasonry has shaped my life in ways that I could never have imagined in 1958, as a 15-year-old boy at church, when C. Stanley Chapman sought me out to ask if I knew about the Order of DeMolay. Since then, I have tried to live a life that is worthy of his having asked that question so many years ago. ✧

***Freemasonry
became for
me a journey
into gaining
knowledge
of myself
beyond just
learning
more about
Freemasonry
itself.***

IT FEELS LIKE HOME

ONE LODGE PROVES THAT REGARDLESS OF SIZE, INTIMACY
AND BROTHERHOOD ARE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS
OF A VIBRANT MEMBER EXPERIENCE

By Michelle Simone

Perusing the member roster of Home Lodge No. 721 doesn't exactly convey a sense of intimacy. Located in the bustling Los Angeles suburb of Van Nuys, California, the lodge counts among its members 369 Master Masons, not to mention another 40 plus Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts. But speaking to members there reveals that numbers can be deceiving: Regardless of roster size, Home Lodge is a close-knit brotherhood, a refuge, and yes — a *home*. This is a culture the lodge has worked hard to maintain, and it's one that prospective members are welcomed into from the beginning.

CONTAGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

Many men first encounter Home Lodge through Past Master Michael David, who fields website inquiries. David makes time to meet with each man to “get the scoop” about what he's seeking from Masonry — ensuring he is hoping to develop genuine friendships, a deeper purpose, and self-improvement, rather than simply networking opportunities. When David is certain that a man is a good fit, he explains the lodge's expectations and application process.

“Some guys think they'll come in one night, get initiated, and that's that,” he says. “If they don't understand what they're signing up for, they'll get frustrated and their coaches feel rushed, too. I not only explain the commitment, but also help them to understand that the time they put in before becoming members is valuable — both to them and to the rest of the lodge.”

Home Lodge makes an effort for new men to feel immediately welcomed and valued. Prospective members are invited to a stated meeting dinner or other event, where they are introduced to Leland Celestre, the current master. They're often seated at Celestre's table or placed beside David or Steven Eberhardt — a past master who served as lodge secretary for a number of years. The goal is to get to know them better and facilitate conversations. Stated meeting dinners are bustling, fun-filled affairs, attended by more than 100 brothers each month, along with their partners and children; Masonic youth order members; and members of adult Masonic organizations, from Eastern Star to the York Rite.

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“That’s what we do as brothers — we recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of each other’s lives.”

PETER VOGELSANG

For Celestre, monthly dinners are one of the lodge’s best opportunities to welcome new men into the fold. “Guys come in not really knowing what to expect. When they arrive, they find out that not only will they get to know other brothers in our lodge, but that we are part of a great Masonic community. And, we have a lot going on.”

“The energy is contagious and applicants tend to want to be part of it,” says David. “It’s all positive. When our guys see each other, we don’t shake hands; we hug.”

COME EVERY WEDNESDAY

It’s not only monthly meetings that bring brothers together. As Junior Steward Peter Vogelsang explains, “Wednesday nights are lodge nights.” It’s a slogan Eberhardt coined some years ago, encouraging brothers to set aside each Wednesday evening for Masonry. For officers, this often means coming together to rehearse the ritual (performing top-notch, meaningful rituals is one of the lodge’s highest priorities). But for newer brothers, it’s also an opportunity to put Masonry on their schedules; to know they will be welcomed with open arms each week. “From the beginning, brothers encouraged me to be there,” recalls Vogelsang. “Even if there was a meeting or the officers were busy rehearsing, they made time to talk to me — to give me things to read; to answer my questions. I felt like I was wanted there; that I belonged.”

At 23, Vogelsang is one of Home Lodge’s younger members. Ambitious by nature, he is balancing full-time work at an alcohol and drug abuse treatment center with pursuing his bachelor’s degree in business administration. “I see the lodge as my place of refuge, when I’m stressed out at work, with school, or at home,” he says. Vogelsang was raised a Master Mason in June 2016; just six months later, he joined the officer line. The role has been an easy fit. “I was at the lodge every Wednesday already,” he says. “I wanted to give back.”

This kind of enthusiasm is what Home Lodge leadership looks for — and helps to facilitate. David passes out business cards that prospective members can text or call for information about stated meetings. He usually swaps phone numbers with them too, letting them know that they can call and text him anytime with questions about the fraternity. He tallies their messages and attendance at events to get a sense for how engaged they are. “We don’t want to chase after people,” he says. “We want them to know that they can come to us, and that we want them here — but it’s up to them to make Masonry a priority.”

A FEELING OF BELONGING

Diversity is another strength and point of pride for Home Lodge. “We have guys born in the United States, Lebanon, and Israel; we have artists, bankers, real estate agents, and construction workers — when I say our lodge is diverse, it really is exactly that,” says Vogelsang. A poignant moment when he was an Entered Apprentice was when the lodge took a moment at a stated meeting to acknowledge a brother who had been liberated from a Nazi concentration camp in Poland 70 years before. “This anniversary was a huge moment for our lodge,” he recalls. “It’s not an experience any of us could share, but it is one that we all felt acutely grateful to be sharing beside him. That’s what we do as brothers — we recognize and appreciate the uniqueness of each other’s lives.”

“When our lodge was chartered in the 1950s, the first members wanted it to have a ‘home feeling.’ We still try to create that sense of true brotherhood today,” says David.

On Vogelsang’s first visit to the lodge, Eberhardt pointed to a sign hanging inside the lodge with the words, “Brother, if you come from any lodge in the world, this is your home.” Following his initiation, Eberhardt walked up to Vogelsang and said, “Welcome home.” It was an emotional moment for Vogelsang. The words rang true; he was home. He could feel it. ♦

DONOR PROFILE

TO DO MY PART

MEET DAVID D. JOHNSON
MASON FOR 29 YEARS
FORMER GRAND SWORD BEARER
CORNERSTONE SOCIETY MEMBER
AND 21ST CENTURY CLUB DONOR

"I talk to strangers in elevators," says David Johnson, in a matter-of-fact tone of voice. The jovial past master of Conejo Valley Lodge No. 807 has a knack for befriending people — and discovering Masons while he's at it. It's how, at one wine tasting in Paso Robles, he and the vintner got to talking and discovered they were brothers. It's why his neighbor in Vacaville, after several curbside chats, shared the membership card he carried for an Ohio lodge he hadn't attended in 25 years. He persuaded the vintner to host a wine maker's dinner at Conejo Valley Lodge; it grew into a series of dinners and a friendship. Johnson persuaded his neighbor to come to stated meeting at Vacaville Lodge No. 134; the long-absent Ohio brother soon affiliated, and is currently filling in as tiler.

"I talk about Masonry," Johnson says. "If I didn't, I wouldn't have recognized these men as brothers and become friends with them."

From 2002 to 2003, he traveled the state as grand sword bearer. Today, he serves as candidate's coach at Vacaville Lodge, and volunteers as a training coordinator for the Lodge Outreach Program. A registered investment advisor, he has also served on the boards of trustees of the California Masonic Foundation and California Masonic Memorial Temple. He and his wife, Nora, are founding members of the Cornerstone Society, through which they have dedicated a portion of their estate to Grand Lodge charities. They are also members of the 21st Century Club — the fraternity's most generous donors.

"I've always felt that if you're going to be involved in an organization, you need to do as much as you can," Johnson says. "I want to do my part." ♦

Read an extended version of this article online at freemason.org/Nov17Johnson





An illustration on the left side of the page depicts two men in a Masonic lodge. One man, with dark skin and short dark hair, is wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, standing with his back to the viewer. The other man, with light skin and white hair, is wearing a dark suit, a red vest, and a dark tie, standing and facing the first man. They are positioned in front of a large, fluted column. Atop the column is a circular stone with three stars. To the left of the column, a framed emblem featuring a sunburst and a letter 'G' is visible. The background consists of arched niches.

THE MEN WHO MIGHT BE MASONS

By Laura Benys

Someday soon, Ricardo Torres Jr. intends to bring his 92-mile-per-hour fastball to the major leagues. With it, he hopes to add his name to the long list of public figures who are California Freemasons, including John Steinbeck, his hometown's most famous native son.

When some fan asks him about his first brushes with Masonry, he may tell the story of standing in an Oakland, California, parking lot one June night after an A's-Yankees' game, 18 years old, stranded. His car had been stolen. He pulled out his phone and checked the time: 11 p.m. It would take more than three hours for someone to come get him and drive back to Salinas. His dad's work shift began at 4 a.m.

He called his lodge brother and asked for a lift. It had been two weeks since his Entered Apprentice degree.

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When the circumstances are right, a sort of alchemy occurs between a man and the fraternity. The man's character, the lodge's efforts, and the experience of the ritual come together for a transformation: The man becomes a Mason. He sees himself a little differently. He approaches the world a bit more thoughtfully. All this begins with his arrival on the lodge's doorstep as a so-called "prospect," and the process of determining whether he will pursue an application for membership. As Masonry is intended to be a lifelong commitment, this is no small thing to sort out. It's what his time as a prospect is for. The lodge's job is to put him at ease and make him feel valued, rather than scrutinized. Leaders must ensure that both sides ask the right questions, and that they have created an environment that facilitates sincere answers. Most of us are not at our best in unfamiliar situations; the lodge must find a way to coax a prospect's heart out of his chest and onto his sleeve. The prospect's job is to be open and honest.

Alexis Baloji remembers entering Washington Lodge No. 20 for a stated meeting dinner last June. It was a Thursday, and he had walked the half-mile from his home in Sacramento. He was looking for a community of upstanding people. He was eager to discuss the laws of the universe.

Baloji's English is heavily accented in French. He was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and grew up in Brussels. "I was a little bit nervous because I did not know what to expect," he admits. But as it turned out, what he remembers most about that first dinner is "the feeling of peace and joy" in his heart. He remembers good conversation, and the respect his brothers showed him. A group of young men from DeMolay, a Masonic youth organization, were present, and he was impressed with how they carried themselves. "The brothers I met during these dinners were friendly and open," he says. "I felt that I had known them for many years."

Because of the way Washington Lodge welcomed him, Baloji's interest blossomed. He returned to two more dinners, and his feelings were reinforced. By the time he submitted his application, he had made certain promises to himself: He was ready to give his free time to the lodge. He was ready to follow the fraternity's teachings and devote himself to its principles. He hoped, more than anything, to "shine as a good example of honesty and integrity."

The quality of a member is not a matter of background, social standing, or any superficial factor. It is a question of his innermost character and motivation, and how they interact with Masonry. Is he willing to put in the effort that the craft requires? Will he have the patience for its lessons? Does he understand the commitment he's making?

In other words: Is his heart in it? Lodges must ask themselves a version of this question every time they consider a prospect. For some, this question signals a parting of ways. For others, like Baloji, it's a precursor to understanding where the basis of Masonry resides within each man.

"FREEMASONRY HAS TAUGHT ME THAT LIFE AND EVERYONE IN IT ARE CONNECTED."

MATTHEW GIBOREES



There was a time, not long ago, when United States lodges concerned themselves less with the measurement of individual quality and more with the counting of heads. They handed out applications after cursory introductions, with virtually no knowledge of the candidate's intentions. Lately, membership development has taken a different view. Freemasonry in Europe, with its average lodge size of 34 brothers, has long shown that the membership total isn't what matters. Smaller lodges in California are now proving it too. The quality of brothers, not quantity, is what determines a lodge's health.

This means each and every prospect has the potential to shape his lodge. But even the finest among them needs encouragement.

Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge No. 307 is led this year by Master Scott Gilbert. "We've made a conscious decision: We want prospects to understand what the commitment is," Gilbert says. "We want them to feel important, and for them to understand that they're joining a community. They may come in looking for one thing, but they will discover many more layers within the fraternity."

Eight years ago, Gilbert showed up at Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge, new to Masonry. He and his wife had just had their first child, and he was searching for a way to get involved in community service. He liked the brothers immediately, and was intrigued by what he gleaned of Masonry. But he also remembers feeling a bit at sea after he submitted his application, unsure how he fit in or what was expected of him. It wasn't until he inserted himself more fully into lodge activities that he started to consider himself part of a brotherhood. Eventually, he realized that he had found more than a vehicle for community service; he and his family had gained a new community altogether. Gilbert started to map out his role in it.



Perhaps he saw something of himself in Matthew Giborees, another young father who found the lodge a few years later. Giborees came to Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge to sort fact from fiction. He'd heard pop-culture conspiracy theories, but was struck by the U.S. early presidents and founding fathers who were Masons. He was drawn to the promise of making good men better.

"I wanted to be like the men that I look up to," Giborees says. "Freemasonry seemed to provide a path to help me emulate my heroes."

Gilbert and other lodge leaders kept in touch with Giborees, encouraging him to attend events, to volunteer alongside the lodge at its annual book fair and at the Midnight Mission charitable organization, and eventually, after he had become a Mason, to chair the Cooking Committee with other new members.

Without this kind of early involvement and follow-through, prospects and new Masons are always on the verge of drifting away. By contrast, in the two years since Giborees' introduction to the fraternity, he's embraced his responsibility in its future. He wants to carry Masonry forward so that his two boys — Eli, age 3, and Dominic, 9 months — might someday share his experience. "I hope to help the fraternity preserve its traditional and classic feel," Giborees says. "That's the thing I love most about it. It's the one place you can go that hasn't changed."

"The world is in a state of disconnect. We've lost our relationships and don't even realize it," he adds. "It's easy to be egocentric and ignore the world around you. Freemasonry has taught me that life and everyone in it are connected."

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When Torres, the teenage baseball player from Salinas, stepped into his first lodge, “I didn’t know what I was going to find,” he says. He was curious about the Masonic symbols he’d noticed on license plates, and a cornerstone on his college campus. These chance encounters had led him to do an online search that ended here, a stated meeting dinner at Salinas Lodge No. 204.

James Riley rose to greet him. Riley punctuates text messages almost exclusively with exclamation points, and describes people as “the fuel that keeps me going.” Many Masons talk about the lifelong friendships they develop in the fraternity; Riley makes it his business to start them. He keeps an eye out for the men who wander into lodge dinners looking not quite sure what to expect. He is often the first to walk up and offer his hand. “I get them talking about their hobbies, and they light up,” he says. “Then I find somebody else with a similar hobby, and introduce them. Now they have a connection, and that could be a lifelong friendship.”

More than five decades separate him and Torres (Riley is 73), but nevertheless, when Riley welcomed the young man to Salinas Lodge that night, they hit it off. Riley remembers thinking, “I like that kid. He’s got some pluck.”

“I just clicked with him,” says Torres. “We sat and talked, and we had things in common.”

Torres was energized immediately by the principles and structure of Masonry, and regards its legacy with awe. “I’m learning the same things George Washington learned,” he says. Despite a rigorous baseball and class schedule, he threw himself into the work. His degree coaches met with him almost daily for his first and second degrees; with their support, he moved through all three degrees in three months so he could become a Master Mason at age 18. (The ceremony was held the day before his 19th birthday.)

His friendship with Riley developed at a similar pace. By the time he’d submitted his application to the lodge, he was



accompanying Riley to car clubs and learning to change the oil on vintage cars. As he progressed through the degrees, he got in the habit of joining Riley and other Salinas brothers when they attended events at neighboring lodges. They planned a day trip down to San Luis Obispo to tour the historic building of King David’s Lodge No. 209.

Riley was the brother who Torres called when he found himself stranded. “I have childhood friends that I would say are my brothers, but I don’t think they would be willing to drive 100 miles to pick me up in Oakland at 11 o’clock at night,” Torres says. “My Masonic brother was — and I would do the same.” Today, if he has a long drive ahead of him, such as a trip to Los Angeles to visit friends, “Jim is just one of those people besides my parents and my sisters that I call to say I’m OK,” he says. Riley does the same for Torres when he’s on the road all day for work.

One day this summer, Riley stopped by Torres’ college baseball game to watch him pitch, and a woman introduced herself as Torres’ mother. She thanked him for looking out for her son. She asked if she could give him a hug.

“I have no children. I’m an only child, so I don’t have nieces or nephews. I really think of him as a kind of surrogate nephew now,” Riley says.

After Torres submitted his application for degrees, Riley asked if he’d like him to be his mentor. “You already are,” Torres replied.



BECOMING A MASON

In the handful of months since Torres first walked into Salinas Lodge, his mother has told him repeatedly that she sees him becoming a better man. He feels his relationship with his parents and sisters deepening. He brought his father to his first stated meeting dinner over the summer, and his brother-in-law recently asked how he might become a Mason, too.

As the youngest member of the lodge, Torres does not feel out of place. He feels lucky. He was going through his degrees when his grandmother passed away, and found himself looking forward to coaching sessions as much for the moral support as for the instruction. "The knowledge of an older person is so valuable nowadays," he says. "These brothers aren't here because they want something out of me. They say, 'I'm going to help you' and it's genuine. They want me to be safe. In today's world, you don't find much of that. And I would do anything for a brother. If anybody needs anything from me, I'm there."

Every lodge has their Rick Torres, their Alex Baloji, their Matt Giborees: prospects who seem to light up around Freemasonry as if recognizing an old friend. Under the right circumstances, they might become Masons.

It's up to lodges to encourage them. This often begins quietly, by treating them as the lifelong friends they could become, and helping them recognize the Masonic qualities already within them. As Torres describes it, it's a matter of the heart. "You know you're a real Mason, because there's a certain feeling you get when you do something good," he says.

What follows is the future of Freemasonry. These days, Torres sees endless possibilities for good. He also notices Masonic symbols everywhere he turns. It gets him thinking about what lies ahead. "Some of the streets in my town are named after Masons. These men reflected great honor on my city," he says. "I'd love to reflect honor on our fraternity too. We need to keep this secret alive. I would love to keep our lodge active throughout the years, so that Masonry is still around in Salinas when my children grow up."

"It's up to us to carry ourselves accordingly," he says. "To do good things. Contribute well to society. Clean up the community. Then, generations to come are going to like what they see — and they're going to remember that Masons made this." ♦

"THESE **BROTHERS** AREN'T HERE
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YOU DON'T FIND MUCH OF THAT."

RICARDO TORRES JR.



CRAFTING THE PROSPECT EXPERIENCE

WHEN MEN FIND MASONRY, THEY BEGIN TO ENRICH THEIR OWN LIVES – AND TO ENRICH, AND BE ENRICHED BY, MENTORS IN THE LODGE. MEET FOUR MEN WHO PLAY A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF WELCOMING BROTHERS TO MASONRY.

A photograph of a man sitting in a wooden chair with blue cushions in a lodge. The man is wearing a white shirt and blue jeans, and has several beaded bracelets on his left wrist. The background shows a row of similar chairs and a wooden door.

ENTERED APPRENTICE

DANNY FOXX

Panamericana Lodge No. 513

Though he has been a Mason fewer than six months, Danny Foxx has realized that he has always thought in a Masonic way. To Danny, one of the most rewarding aspects of the fraternity is the way it encourages everyone to be more comfortable in their own skin, unveiling a world of possibilities. "Masonry really is a whole different way of life," he says. "There's a magic in the ritual and the bonding of the community... In Masonry, you feel that sense of brotherhood. Since the first day I met my brothers, I knew I was home."

Read more: freemason.org/Nov17Apprentice



TOP-LINE SIGNER

STEVE WINGFIELD

La Mesa Lodge No. 407

Over the years, Senior Warden Steve Wingfield has been a “top-line signer” on many prospects’ petitions and has helped coach some of them as well. “It’s an honor and a privilege to be a top-line signer, and if asked to be one, I feel a commitment to help the applicant on his Masonic journey,” he says. “Every privilege carries with it an obligation, and in this case it means following up with my candidates to help them with their ritual, answering questions, and sometimes giving them pep talks to help them move forward. Signing a petition is the easy part, but there’s more to it than that.”

Read more: freemason.org/Nov17Signer



TILER

JACK HENNINGS JR.

Saddleback Laguna Lodge No. 672

"The tiler is a very valuable position. It's more than just taking a past master and saying, 'Sit outside the door.'" As a third-term tiler and past master himself, Jack Hennings speaks from experience. A central part of his role is ensuring that guests and candidates have a fulfilling experience each time they come to lodge and that they learn about the fraternity. When the brothers retire to the lodge room, he hosts roundtable discussions with prospects on the process of becoming a Mason and what it means to be one. He answers their historical, spiritual, and esoteric questions about the craft in a game he calls "Stump the Tiler." "Before they get their application, they have a pretty solid understanding of what Freemasonry is about and the history behind it all," he says. "This is a lifetime commitment."

Read more: freemason.org/Nov17Tiler

A photograph of Mike Arnerich, a man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a blue polo shirt with a name tag that says "MIKE". He is smiling and looking towards the right. To his left is another man with dark hair, and to his right is a man wearing a red baseball cap and a black t-shirt. They are outdoors, with trees and a wooden fence in the background.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MIKE ARNERICH

Modesto Lodge No. 206

For Past Master Mike Arnerich, working with prospective and new members strengthens his own craft, giving him a deeper understanding of Masonry and its friendships. Teaching future Masons about what the fraternity is — and isn't — constantly reminds him of his own reasons for seeking Masonry, and the friendships he has developed and nurtured along the way. Giving both prospects and current members opportunities to come together is key, he explains. "If you want to be successful, the lodge must be active socially." It is within the lodge room that men become Masons and share the secrets of the fraternity. But it is outside these walls that men become brothers. ♦

Read more: freemason.org/Nov17Secretary



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Tradition and Evolution

EXPLORING THE UNIQUE AND VIBRANT
PROSPECT EXPERIENCE OF LODGES
AT THE MASONIC HOMES

By Antone R.E. Pierucci

It might be a cliché to say that every lodge is unique, but when your lodge sits on the campus of a retirement community of Freemasons, “unique” is the most fitting word that comes to mind. Along with Destiny Lodge No. 856 in Covina, Siminoff Daylight Lodge No. 850 in Union City blends the old with the new as it works to grow its membership while maintaining its unique identity. “Our problems, our opportunities, and our challenges seem to be different than other lodges’,” explains Jose Larin, candidates coach and senior warden.

With members who have been in the fraternity for 40 or 50 years, both Siminoff Daylight and Destiny lodges enjoy the benefit of experience. But in Union City, that experience might not always include experience with the fraternity. That’s because the Union City campus has two retirement communities: the Masonic Home for Masons and their spouses and Acacia Creek, which also welcomes non-Masonic residents. “We get men from Acacia Creek who never thought about Masonry their whole lives until they moved here,” Larin says. “And then we have members from the Masonic Homes whose lives have been immersed in it.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26





JOSE LARIN (RIGHT), CANDIDATES COACH AND SENIOR WARDEN AT SIMINOFF DAYLIGHT LODGE NO. 850, ENJOYED COACHING RECENT MASTER MASON MANUEL GALLARDO (LEFT).

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In Covina, Destiny Lodge is a relatively new feature of the campus. When the children's home closed and the Covina Home became exclusively a retirement community, it was time for the campus to have its own lodge. "When my wife and I first moved in [in 2011], some of the men came up to me and asked if I wanted to help create a lodge on the campus," says Ralph Mulhern, a 78-year-old resident and 44-year Mason. He agreed to help and after two years of hard work, Destiny Lodge was chartered. Like Siminoff Daylight Lodge, many of Destiny Lodge's members are veteran Masons. "A lot of the residents of the Home are past masters from other lodges. We also have a few former Grand Lodge officers," Mulhern explains.

Ultimately, however, no amount of experience can make up for sheer energy — something that Destiny Lodge has never struggled with. Although the rigors of serving as a lodge officer can be demanding, Covina residents willingly participate. The problem is that there are relatively few of them. "We only have about 28 Masons living on campus along with their wives," Ralph says. The lodge needs new members to maintain its vibrancy.

Raised a Master Mason in 2012, 43-year-old Larin has been actively engaged in promoting Siminoff Daylight Lodge in the hopes of attracting new, active members. The lodge has created a new website, Facebook page, and Instagram account to take on the challenge of modernizing. "Now people from the outside can research us online. It gets us exposure." So far, these efforts seem to be working. More than half of Siminoff Daylight Lodge's current officers hail from beyond the retirement community.

Their success in finding new members rests largely on the one commodity they have plenty of: knowledge acquired over the decades. For the past six years Manuel "Manny" Gallardo has worked as a chef at the Masonic Home in Union City. When he decided to petition for membership, choosing a lodge wasn't difficult. "Let's say



RALPH MULHERN (LEFT), A FOUNDING MEMBER OF DESTINY LODGE NO. 856 AND ITS CURRENT MARSHAL AND CANDIDATES COACH, DISCUSSES THE LESSONS OF FREEMASONRY WITH ENTERED APPRENTICE JESSE ALDERETTE (RIGHT).

I'm looking to become a cook," says the recently raised Master Mason. "Do I want to go to a place where every other cook there has only been cooking for a year or two? Or, do I want to go to a place where some of these guys have been cooking for 20, 30, or 40 years; where they can really tell me the ins and outs of what I'm doing?"

Larin, Gallardo's former candidate's coach, agrees: "To have members with this level of experience is rewarding. They draw from years and years of performing the rituals. That's the benefit of Siminoff."

Relying on more traditional methods like word of mouth and hosting public events on campus, Destiny Lodge in Covina has also grown as well. Now, a majority of its members come from the Covina community itself. And, as in Union City, this includes members of the campus staff, who have become immersed in Masonry's values.

Jesse Alderette, a 26-year-old dietary aid working on the Covina campus, knows a thing or two about Masonic values. His desire to join Destiny Lodge lies in his past. "I resided here in Covina at the Children's Home for about 10 months back when I was in sixth grade," he explains.

"They really took care of the residents. I have a lot of fond memories here. Now, I want to give back to the fraternity."

Just initiated in August, Jesse is working closely with Mulhern, who has been the lodge's candidates coach for the past few years. Although there is a more than 50-year age difference between them, neither Jesse nor Ralph are too concerned. In fact, at both lodges, the age gap between the residents of the campus and the incoming Masons is not top of mind. "Honestly, I didn't even think about it," admits Alderette.

The key to making it work, Mulhern explains, is to meet candidates on their own level. "Everyone is different," he says.

Ultimately, the challenge of integrating younger Masons into a lodge that prides itself in the experience — and age — of its members, isn't a challenge at all. At the end of the day, these lodges are a reminder of an important tenet of the fraternity: brothers entering a lodge are to treat each other with warmth and respect, regardless of background, race, creed — or, yes, age. ♦





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