

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2015



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FREEMASON

THE
JOURNEY EAST

*EACH
BROTHER'S
PATH
TO*

WISDOM



STRIVING TO ATTAIN WISDOM TAKES



CLEAR EYES,



HARD WORK,
A VIRTUOUS HEART,



and diligent

SELF-AWARENESS.



**BUT IT IS
WAITING ALONG
EACH
MASON'S
PATH.**

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CONTENTS

VOLUME 63 /// NUMBER 6 /// AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015

WISDOM

IS NOT NATURALLY ACQUIRED;
NOR EASILY MEASURED.

**BUT WE KNOW IT
WHEN WE SEE IT.**

12 FEATURE

The Journey East

The ancients yearned for it. Entire religions and philosophies laid their foundation upon it. All of Masonry is a journey toward it. Wisdom is that quiet but unmistakable combination of experience, knowledge, and virtue. And Masonry gives each brother the map, training, and tools to find it within himself.



2	EXECUTIVE MESSAGE	11	FACEBOOK POLL
6	MEMBER PROFILE	19	MASONIC EDUCATION

- 3**

LODGE SPOTLIGHT

An intergenerational membership base helps brothers of all ages enjoy a rich Masonic experience at Yosemite Lodge No. 99.
- 8**

IN CALIFORNIA

The experiences and lessons of Masonry are designed to lead a man to wisdom. For these three brothers, the wisdom of age is also what led them to Masonry.
- 21**

HISTORY

From symbolic pillars to the holy writings, the lodge room is filled with objects that signify the Masonic ideal of wisdom.
- 25**

MASONIC ASSISTANCE

Through professionally led poetry workshops, Masonic Homes residents tap into memories and creativity to observe, heal, rejoice, and discover.



WISDOM: A BUILDING PROCESS

In our ritual, it is said that there should be *wisdom to contrive*. But what does that mean? Does it involve knowledge? Absolutely! When a new Mason recites the lecture of each degree, both the brother and his coach feel a sense of achievement as the worshipful master congratulates him and declares him proficient. If, in addition to reciting the words, the new brother has learned and understood their meaning, then he has gained knowledge. This, however, is only the first step toward wisdom. Common sense, good judgment, experience, and understanding are all required, too. A wise person draws upon these attributes to gain the insight necessary for sound decisions and actions.

Because Masonic lessons are taught through symbolism and allegory, as we study the ritual, everything must be seen as a metaphor. It becomes very important for every Mason to look for deeper meanings and to seek further light in Masonry.

So, how do we develop our own understanding of wisdom over the course of our personal development within Freemasonry? Some of the answer to this question may be found within the words “personal development.” It is up to each of us to proactively grow within the fraternity. We must participate in Masonic education, attend seminars, enroll in lodge management courses, and accept committee assignments. We must ask questions, and reflect upon the answers we receive. If we ask about a square, and are told that it is an emblem of morality, we must take our inquiry a step further and consider what “morality” means to us, and how

this concept enters into our decisions and actions. The same applies to brotherly love, relief, and truth as well as temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. While these core tenets are explained in our lectures, they must be internalized to be meaningful – and for us to become wiser through our understanding of them.

It is well stated in the Installation of Officers Ceremony that, “Suffice it to say that what you see praiseworthy in others, you should carefully imitate, and what in them may have appeared defective, you should yourself avoid.” This is a lesson that we can apply both inside the lodge and in our communities.

So, how can we share our knowledge with newer brothers? One way is to give them answers or to tell them how we would do something. But a better way is to serve as mentors. What is the difference? A mentor actively listens and leads the brother through a discovery process. Rather than providing answers, he asks questions that encourage the mentee’s consideration. A true mentor understands that wisdom develops over time; it is a cumulative process. His reward is the satisfaction he receives seeing a newer brother grow and develop.

If we define wisdom as a continuing process of discovery, and then add that it involves an understanding of people and situations, I would argue that it is an acquired trait rather than an inherited characteristic. As wisdom is sought, it is developed. This is a lesson we begin to learn as new Masons, but one that is also instructive throughout our lives, as we continue our personal development within our treasured craft. ✧

MOUTH TO EAR

SHARING MASONIC WISDOM - FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

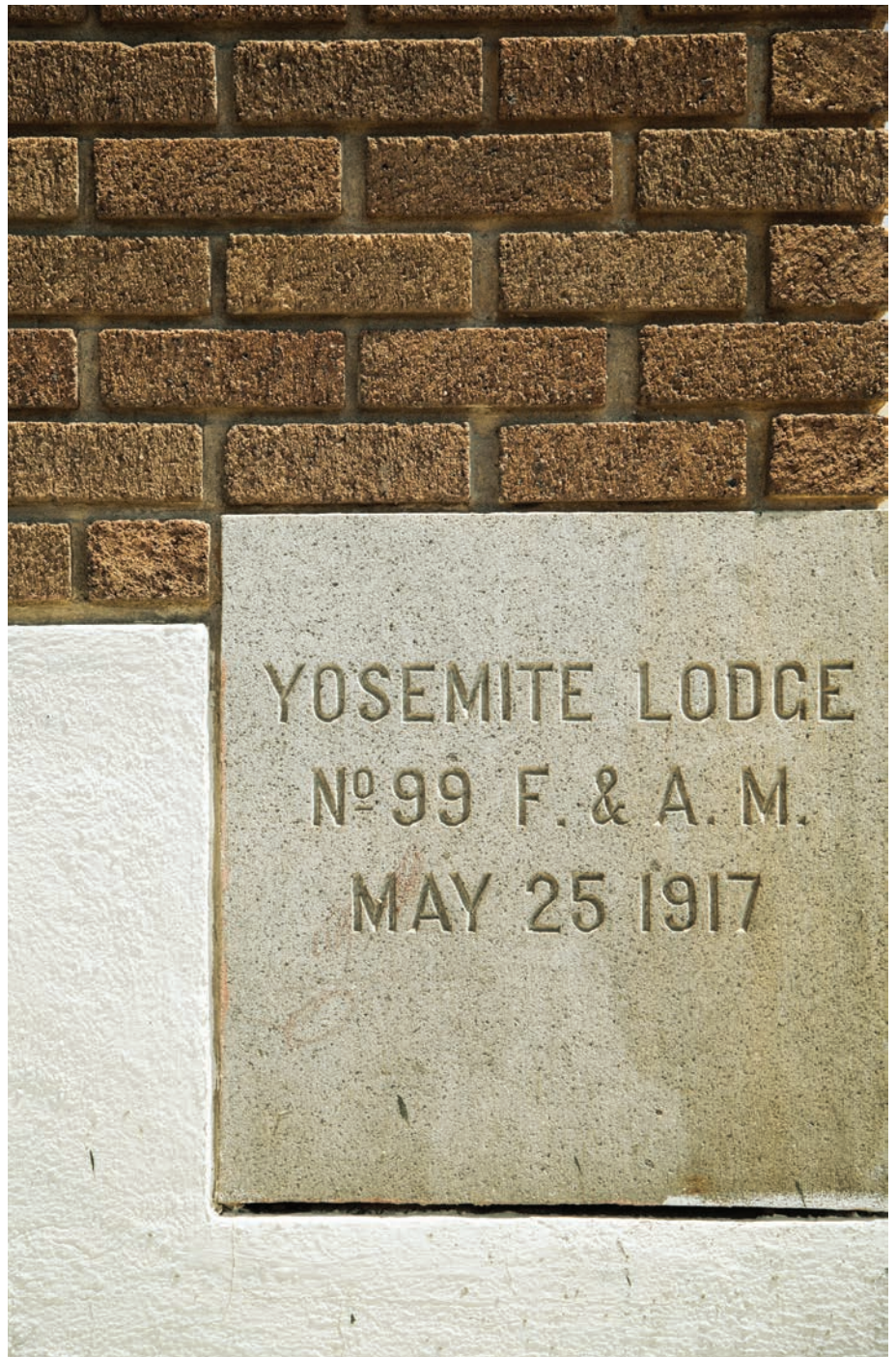
By Matt Markovich

Passing along the lessons of the craft

The average age of a California Mason today is 64 years old. Now imagine for a moment all of California Freemasonry as a single 64-year-old Mason. At this stage in his life, what are the issues he must confront? The realities he must face? How can he ensure that the wisdom he has accumulated over a lifetime of service will be handed down to the generations that follow?

In Merced, members of Yosemite Lodge No. 99 have had the opportunity to explore these questions and the concept of Masonic legacy firsthand. The lodge has a growing group of young applicants from nearby University of California, Merced. Of six new Master Masons, five hail directly from the university – and another 20 students have applied for membership. According to lodge veterans like current secretary and candidate coach Michael Hall, these young members have infused Yosemite Lodge with new vitality and fresh ideas.

Hall reports that many of the applicants came from UC Merced's on-campus fraternity system. Their curiosity piqued by the



Continued next page

LODGE SPOTLIGHT



YOSEMITE LODGE MEMBERS COMBINE VETERAN EXPERIENCE WITH A FRESH OUTLOOK.
(FROM LEFT) JARED GOODIN , DAVID MEDEIROS, ISADOR ORTEGA, MIKE HALL, ROBERT BAILEY.

revelation that Masons founded many college fraternities, young applicants find that the structure and ceremony of service-based college fraternities were directly inspired by Masonic rites and principles.

In addition to increasing the number of candidates, the university connection has attracted those who are highly educated. And, during his candidate coaching sessions, Hall has been reminded that the transfer of wisdom is a two-way street. “The brother who brought me into the lodge had an eighth-grade education,” Hall recalls. “Yet his understanding of Freemasonry was top-notch. The kid I’m coaching now has a

degree in bioengineering. It’s very interesting to see the diversity and exchange of wisdom in both directions.”

Other new members include the CEO of a nonprofit science startup, and a political science graduate with whom Hall has had interesting philosophical discussions. “He and I got into a great discussion around the question of why Freemasonry has secrets,” Hall says. “Because of his background, this young man was quick to grasp the meaning of allegory and symbolism – the reasons we Masons do the things we’ve done for hundreds of years.”

A treasure trove of experience

While existing members are offered a fresh outlook on the lessons of the craft, Freemasonry offers younger members the

ability to continually expand the scope of their own understanding, particularly as they progress through the degrees.

“We all came to Masonry for the same reasons – we want to become better men and spend time among better men,” explains Yosemite Lodge’s 23-year-old junior steward and candidate coach, Robert Bailey. “The value of interacting with diverse generations is that we’re able to access a treasure trove of knowledge. [Younger members like me] are working to overcome many of the same life obstacles that the older members have already experienced. They help guide us.”

In other words, one of the biggest benefits of Freemasonry to younger members is access to the older generations’ wisdom.

Generations and generativity

According to psychologist Erik Erikson, psychological development can be broken down into a series of conflicts people address as they mature. Perhaps the most critical is how we continue to develop – or fail to do so – as we grow older. If one successfully navigates this process, he achieves the final stage: wisdom. But it is the penultimate stage that addresses the struggle between what Erickson termed “generativity” and “stagnation.”

Generativity, as characterized by Erikson, is participation in forward-looking activities, for example: having a family, taking part in meaningful work, and pursuing civic engagement. Stagnation occurs when one is either unable or unwilling to help move society forward, or when he becomes self-centered and increasingly dissatisfied with his lack of productivity or overall contribution.

This concept is demonstrated at the very core of Masonic practice. Freemasonry’s rites and rituals are a means of creating a structure through which intergenerational transfer of knowledge can take place, and they are central to maintaining the Masonic ethos over time. As Hall says, “The basic principle of Masonry, through our ritual of mouth to ear, shows us how to pass along wisdom.”

But Hall also believes it is important for the transmission of wisdom to be reciprocal. “The students and other new

members have wisdom to convey to us,” he says. “When long-time members sit down and talk things over amongst ourselves, we revisit things we’ve talked about for 40 years. New members bring a fresh perspective. A candidate may bring a different way of looking at the ritual, or an interpretation we have not considered.”

As younger members see the path that lies ahead by gaining a greater understanding of the mindset and motivations of their elders, senior members often gain clarity in their own thinking – and perhaps even a greater confidence to put plans into action. Through reflection and discussions, younger Masons help long-time members understand how their opinions and experiences are valued.

Like many young men, Bailey, who first joined the lodge at 19, had never considered what life would be like as he aged. “Being with so many men who are active and happy into their 80s and even 90s is a surreal experience,” he says. “It has shown me that I need to start planning for a much longer future.”

For those who encourage and nurture candidates, the legacy of their students guarantees that they, too, have a role in the future of Freemasonry. As Hall says, “Some aspects of Masonry continue to change with the times.” Yet even as practices and philosophies evolve, the greatest knowledge members gain may continue to be the understanding that wisdom may be encountered at any age, with anyone who has the courage and humility to share it, mouth to ear. ✧

THE BRIGHTEST OCCASION

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS WITHIN
OUR FRATERNITY

EACH YEAR, THE GRAND LODGE OF CALIFORNIA RECOGNIZES THOSE BROTHERS WHO HAVE BEEN A PART OF FREEMASONRY FOR 75 YEARS. APTLY NAMED THE "DIAMOND JUBILEE" AWARD, RECIPIENTS ARE PRESENTED WITH A LAPEL PIN COMMEMORATING THEIR SIGNIFICANT YEARS OF FRATERNAL DEVOTION.

The Diamond Jubilee recipients recognized by Grand Master Charvonia over the past fraternal year became Masons between 1939 and 1940. This was a fraught time in the United States, just before the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor. Americans throughout the country felt the weight of global conflict, which soon heralded our entry into World War II. Since then, these brothers have witnessed many other global conflicts, the introduction of television and birth of the information age, the

civil rights movement, the rise of mass media, and countless other significant cultural changes.

This diverse group hails from such faraway locations as Missouri, Canada, and England, and they have engaged in a variety of professions – from restaurateur to painter. California Masonry is indebted to them for the brotherly love and wisdom they have bestowed upon the craft throughout their lifetime of fraternal devotion and service. ✧

2014-2015

DIAMOND JUBILEE AWARD

• RECIPIENTS •

Manley Paul Johnson

PROVIDENT THREE PILLARS LODGE NO. 609

Ulysses George Patropulos

PACIFIC-STARR KING LODGE NO. 136

Norman Port

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LODGE NO. 529

Leonard Floyd Ratto

BAY CITIES LODGE NO. 337

Clifton Lorgine Richards, Jr.

UNITY LODGE NO. 632

Ray John Swensen

SIX RIVERS LODGE NO. 106

Walter Clyde Young

TEHAMA LODGE NO. 3

THE SEASONED APPRENTICE

AFTER A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCES, THREE MEN FIND FRATERNITY AT ACACIA CREEK

By Laura Benys

Acacia Creek is a unique place. It shares a campus – and a philosophy – with the Masonic Home, but it is open to anyone, Mason or not. For some of its non-Masonic residents, life becomes an interesting intersection with the fraternity. For others, it is a portal into it.

Roughly two years ago, Donald Keysor moved to Acacia Creek. He was 90 years old at the time, and he knew next to nothing about Freemasonry. Neither did Tau Alpha, who was 74, or Eugene Gire, then 87. Gire, in fact, had lived and taught for 40 years just a mile and a half from the Masonic Home – but until Acacia Creek opened, he had never had a chance to visit the campus.

Keysor, Alpha, and Gire are now Master Masons. These three men moved into Acacia Creek with a lifetime of experiences under their belts, and their values, personal philosophies, and identities fully formed. For all three of them, this move quickly inspired an application for Masonry.

Another beginning

The one Mason that Don Keysor knew prior to moving into Acacia Creek was a former coworker from General Electric. That

coworker had been the one to tell Keysor and his wife, Betty, about the community – and as it turned out, his recommendation was right on the mark.

“Right away we felt like we were home,” Keysor says. “People were so friendly and nice. I said to Betty, ‘We live here in a Masonic place; we ought to learn something about the fraternity. One of the first things I did was ask to become a Mason.’”

Keysor is used to diving into new experiences. He grew up on a farm in Ohio, away from the bustle of city life. But during his career with General Electric, he and Betty lived in New York, Bombay, and Tokyo. Upon retirement, they traveled throughout the 48 continental United States and around Canada and Mexico. They moved to Florida for a decade, then to Phoenix, and later to California.

“People ask which place we liked best,” Keysor says. “I don’t have any preference, because every place is new and has something to offer. We took advantage of having open minds, and enjoyed every place we ever lived.”

And so, at age 90, while settling into their new home at Acacia Creek, Keysor was open to Masonry. Now, he is a familiar face around the on-campus lodge, Siminoff Daylight Lodge No. 850, attending all the degrees and meetings.

“No matter how old you get in years, there’s always new experiences to have,” Keysor says. “Doing new things and meeting new people.”

Familiar values

When Gene Gire moved the mile and a half to Acacia Creek, he did just that. One of Gire’s passions is carpentry, but in his first days on campus, he didn’t have access to the Masonic Home’s woodshop. (These days, he helps run it.) So he wandered over to the morning coffee klatch, where he met some Masons and started to understand what it meant to be a brother.

“As far as I’m concerned, a Mason has the same values as an Eagle Scout,” says Gire, an Eagle Scout himself. “Loyal,

Continued on page 10

DIVING INTO NEW
EXPERIENCES WITH OPEN
MINDS (FROM LEFT):
EUGENE GIRE, TAU ALPHA,
AND DONALD KEYSOR.





trustworthy, brave, helpful, friendly, reverent.” He went to the library, took out a book on the fraternity’s history, and read up. Then he filled out an application.

By that time, he had already spent decades teaching some distinctly Masonic tenets. Before retiring, Gire taught shop and other subjects at Union City’s James Logan High School, just down the street. The school has nearly 4,000 students from vastly different backgrounds and nationalities, so Gire and fellow educators were constantly emphasizing tolerance and respect. Outside the classroom, Gire officiated and coached wrestling and football. He still helps with the football team year-round, including busy summer sessions for incoming freshmen.



WEB EXTRA

Interested in living at Acacia Creek? Visit AcaciaCreek.org for more information, or call (877) 902-7555 and mention offer code “Celebration” to join us for a free, delicious dinner in our dining room. (Offer ends Sept. 1)

“You take care of each other in sports. If we can teach on that level, that’s the start,” he says. “I think that Freemasonry, with the respect we give to each other and to the families, really flows into the same thing.”

Always open

“In Freemasonry, you’re committed to each other,” agrees Tau Alpha. “You’re climbing the same mountain. You’re doing the same thing as a team.”

He and Gire were a team practically from the moment Alpha and his wife, Ann, moved to Acacia Creek. The two men met and became fast friends. Gire had just been initiated as a Mason, and after hearing about his experience, Alpha decided to apply, too. But Alpha is dyslexic, so he needed extra help memorizing the ritual. Gire became his unofficial coach, even as he was working his own way through the second and third degrees. In Alpha’s words, they climbed the mountain together.

Alpha has a long career in cartography, drawing maps of the ocean floor, Mount St. Helens, and national parks across the U.S., to name a few. So he often views the world through a scientist’s eyes. But when it comes to Freemasonry, he sees things differently.

“Freemasonry isn’t in the realm of science, and it’s not supposed to be,” he says. “You can’t prove its tenets. And you don’t need to. It’s in the realm of faith.”

A core piece of Alpha’s personal philosophy is to keep an open mind – something that, as a scientist, keeps him primed for surprising discoveries. In a way, it’s also what opened him up to Masonry at age 74. It’s been a rewarding journey.

“I’ve always been responsible for my own behavior. What I found out after becoming a Mason is that they are committed as individuals to become better people. I like that,” he says. “Masonry reinforces the things I already believed in.”

Out of all his experiences, Alpha considers this his best and simplest piece of wisdom: Think for yourself. As he is quick to point out, “That’s a tenet of Masonry, too.” ♦

Words of Wisdom

We asked more than 86,000 fans on the Masons of California Facebook page:

WHAT'S THE MOST VALUABLE EXAMPLE OF "MASONIC WISDOM" THAT YOU'VE GAINED FROM ANOTHER MASON?

Here is what they said:



To always strive to be a better man than I came in.

Renardo Lynch

The closing charge used at the ending of each degree meeting, in WA... "Be ye all of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of love and peace delight to dwell with you and bless you."

Neil Kent Brown

Practice tolerance, patience, and balance.

Michael David

Always seek more light!

Todd Condon

Sometimes people leave your life only to come back into it. Years can pass but the change is normally for the better.

Nick Watts

When all Masons are sitting in lodge, talking, or having a meal: Doctors, scientists, contractors, insulators, plumbers, bus drivers – we are all brothers sharing the wisdom of equality. All on the square.

William Donnelly

The piece of Masonic wisdom that I like the most is part of the Master Mason lecture, but when I heard it from WB L. Lorrington with his really calm voice, it somehow made more sense: "Time, patience, and perseverance will accomplish all things."

Adan Bautista

Promote love, peace, and unity, and offer help when you can.

Sarkis Boyadjian



WEB EXTRA

Read even more responses from our recent polls – and join the conversation. [Visit us on Facebook.](#)


... FEATURE

THE
JOURNEY EAST

EACH
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PATH
TO

Wisdom

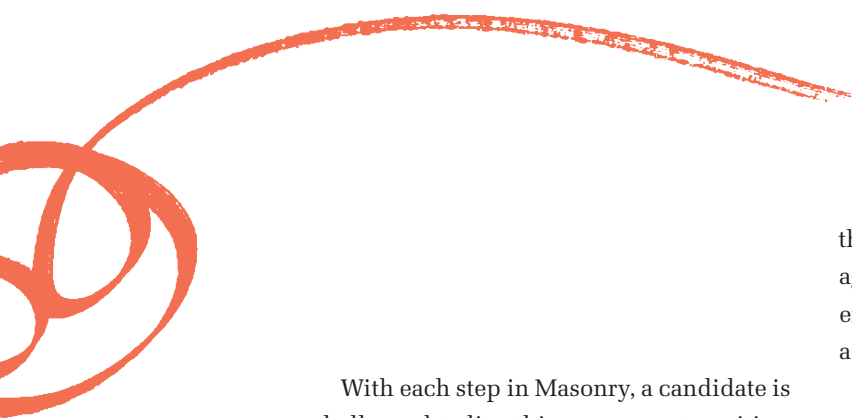
BY LAURA BENYS



In the *Allegory of the Cave*, Socrates tells the story of unfortunate souls chained to the inside of a dark cave, facing the wall. Their world is lit only by the flickering of fire. Their view is varied only by the playing of shadows against the wall before them. The walls of the cave are the boundaries of their understanding. It is not until they are unshackled and come out blinking into the light that they are hit with the real nature and dimension of things. At last, they see life as it really is.



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With each step in Masonry, a candidate is challenged to live this very same transition. Through the progression of his degrees, he moves from blithe unawareness to vivid enlightenment. He takes on the grappling journey from a cave of ignorance toward the light of wisdom.

A DEFINITION OF WISDOM

According to the Greek philosopher Epictetus, wisdom is “the knowledge which is about God.” The ancients yearned for it. Entire religions set their foundation upon it. All of Masonry is a journey toward it.

But what is wisdom, and how does one acquire it?

Trying to define wisdom is very much like attempting to discern the difference between truth and fact. *Fact* belongs to the observable, measurable, scientific world; *truth* belongs to the world of ideas, faith, belief, and philosophy. Wisdom is not naturally acquired; nor easily measured. But we know it when we see it.

To resort to a textbook definition, wisdom is the quiet combination of experience, knowledge, and virtue. As one saying goes, knowledge is having the information. Wisdom is acting upon it.

We often associate age with wisdom; in societies around the world, elders are revered for their sage counsel. But then, age does not necessarily beget such an elusive combination of experience, knowledge, and virtue. It merely creates a greater advantage of time.

And, like age, experiences alone do not lead to wisdom. A person may encounter a variety of opportunities to grow in wisdom. But unless he evaluates his experiences in a contemplative manner, the wisdom may be lost. It is possible for a person to encounter all manners of different people and situations in life, while still operating in a Socratic cave of his own volition.

The path to wisdom is not as simple of an equation as age plus experience. It requires a sort of chemical catalyst; something that changes the nature of an experience from something that happens unto a person to something that is assimilated into that person. The mind must have the capacity and the inclination to recognize the lesson of an experience, and then the fortitude to act upon it. It's not enough to have a map. One must have the training and tools to read it, and the motivation to follow it to its end.

A MASON'S MAP

In his 1903 essay “As a Man Thinketh,” the British philosophical writer James Allen wrote that “man is where he is that he may learn that he may grow; and as he learns the spiritual lesson which any circumstance contains for him, it passes away and gives place to other circumstances.”

As the degrees of Freemasonry point out, wisdom is only acquired along the path to knowledge. It is not something that one can inherit, like perfect pitch or photographic memory. It is not something that one can acquire by happenstance or osmosis. It requires putting in the time, and paying attention to the work. In overcoming one obstacle, we gain the tools to help us overcome the next. Think of life experiences as grades within a classic primary school education: As we

complete kindergarten, we move on to first grade – and so on. Each year, we grow older and are presented with new challenges. Over time, we become better informed about the world and what has meaning and value to us. We gain perspective on *how* to think. We better understand the ethics and moral reasoning used in making choices and decisions about our own behavior.

Masonry's power lies in its ability to integrate its lessons into the psyche of each individual Mason, "meeting him on the level of his own experience, and giving him an opportunity to be transformed by the path of his own life."

Entered Apprentices are taught that they cannot begin the process of improving themselves without first subduing their passions, releasing themselves from their own egos, and feeling the brotherhood of man. As Fellow Crafts, brothers are taught to go beyond human senses and logic in order to encounter divine truth. And, Master Masons learn that they must finally overcome themselves in order to achieve peace and harmony within.

To simply experience the degrees is not enough. There must be understanding. And so, embedded in its symbols, lessons, and language, Masonry also provides each brother with the tools and training to read the map.

Continued next page

KNOWLEDGE

*IS HAVING
THE INFORMATION.*

WISDOM *IS*

ACTING UPON IT.

“

TELL ME, AND
I WILL FORGET.

SHOW ME, AND I MAY
REMEMBER.

INVOLVE ME,
AND I WILL
UNDERSTAND.”

— CONFUCIUS

TAKING THE LONG ROAD

At the heart of this process is that famous dictum of Confucius, uttered around 450 B.C.: “Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.”

In modern times, we see this repeated in our understanding of “experiential learning,” a theory of learning that was introduced in the 1970s and dramatically impacted the design and development of lifelong learning models. In experiential learning, rather than reading about apples, a student goes to an orchard where he sees, touches, smells, and tastes them. Rather than listening to a presentation about how to ride a bike, he gets on a bike. It is active, self-directed learning that moves through four steps: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This experiential process is key for genuine, nuanced understanding – which makes it a prerequisite for wisdom.

But modern technology has complicated the process. Among the instant gratification of Web-based information, with a keyword search and a quick skim, it has become easy to find any information we want in a matter of seconds. Although modern society’s attachment to the Internet presents itself as an alternate – and far quicker – route to information, it actually has very little to do with the process of understanding. As we have gained greater access to information, we have become more inclined to sidestep the experience of learning – the very experience that is necessary for wisdom to develop.

Freemasonry is a notable exception. In lodge, cellphones remain silent and dark. Conversations are accompanied by a

• •

handshake. The candidate moves his body through the ritual as he voices the words and visualizes their meaning. Men have always been drawn to Masonry for its emphasis on fraternity, service, and thoughtful reflection. But for modern men, one of its greatest appeals is also this: tangible connection – to other people, to powerful experiences, and to profound ideas.

Inside the lodge, the degrees of Masonry embody Confucius' plea to "involve me," and move naturally through experiential learning's steps of experience, reflection, abstraction, and experimentation. Within each degree, candidates are guided through a carefully constructed life experience; an allegory of the journey from immaturity and ignorance to maturity and wisdom. The ritual effectively lays out each man's path to "spiritual and philosophical knowledge," giving him a way of thinking about what is important; about those concepts that can add stability and meaning to his life. It takes time and effort to understand all of these levels, but time and effort are two key requirements of the Masonic journey.

INWARD AND UPWARD

The first two questions asked of any Entered Apprentice are, "Whence came you, and whither are you traveling?" and "What came you here to do?" The Entered Apprentice responds accordingly, "from the West travelling East," and "To learn, to subdue my passions, and improve myself; in Masonry." Taken together, they are a powerful first lesson in wisdom: Life can move from worldly ignorance to unworldly enlightenment, but only if it is guided by virtue.

Some forms of inquiry rest upon knowing and understanding facts, but a wise man seeks to discern the difference between a good and evil course of action, and he will always choose good.

That's the thing about wisdom. It must be lived. As Plato pointed out, a distinctive mark of wisdom is that it cannot be misused. Other forms of learning may separate knowledge from action, but the pursuit of wisdom tends to unite them. So it is with Masonry.

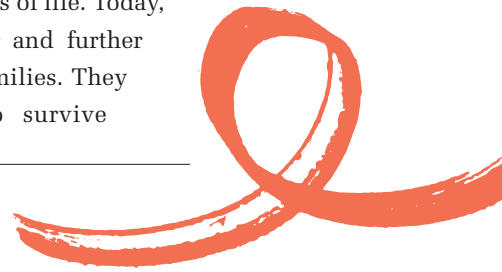
Wisdom elevates knowledge to the plane of virtue, which changes how an individual acts upon the world around him. But that elevation is actually achieved by a steady movement inward.

The Master's Charge given in many Masonic monitors puts it this way: "The ways of virtue are beautiful. Knowledge is attained by degrees. Wisdom dwells in contemplation; there we must seek it." Although Socrates' cave dwellers had to move outside to gain wisdom, to achieve wisdom in our day-to-day lives, Masonry argues that each of us must move inward. Having experience and a moral compass is not enough. Wisdom requires awareness – awareness that isn't always easy to come by, no matter how many years a person has lived or how varied his life experiences have been.

To look at it another way, Freemasonry is a progressive system of awakening consciousness. And, it is built on the clear understanding that men need to be engaged in their own quest for self improvement. Any Mason will tell you that this process takes initiative, and commitment.

But through this quest for self-improvement, a Mason does have support. He has the solidarity of his brothers beside him, embarking on their own quests for wisdom. He has the knowledge that he is among generations of men who can share experiences of age, from all walks of life. Today, many people live further and further from their parents and families. They have the technology to survive

Continued next page



in an increasingly solitary fashion. Yet, technology is not a substitute for familial connections or for a meaningful personal community. The Masonic lodge provides an important role – as a surrogate family as well as a valuable source of cultural exchanges, linking younger and elder men of all backgrounds, and the unique perspectives and lessons that they carry.

The fraternity leads a Mason to virtue, a requirement on the path to wisdom, holding him to obligations steeped in good morals and ethics. Through it all, the ritual is a tether to his ultimate goal: to see the world clearly and act in harmony with it. All of these things, if he is willing to do the work, can be used to cultivate his own wisdom.

THE FRUITS OF WISDOM

In “As a Man Thinketh,” Allen observed that, “Only by much searching and mining, are gold and diamonds obtained, and man can find every truth connected with his being, if he will dig deep into the mine of his soul.” A person can recognize himself as “the builder of his destiny,” Allen writes, only by “utilizing his every experience, even to the most trivial, everyday occurrence, as a means of obtaining that knowledge of himself which is Understanding, Wisdom, Power.”

“
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— JAMES ALLEN

This is a powerful idea. And right down to the metaphor of the builder, it’s one that should sound familiar to members of the fraternity. The inner work of a Mason is his own awakening of consciousness. It is the power of the mind that gives all situations and fortunes their character. And, it is the glory of a man that he can bend the circumstances of his own condition.

This was one of the great secrets of antiquity, known only to a few: We have the power to control our own destiny. We can make of the world what we choose through our own acts of will. In this way, in a very real sense, each of us create our own universe in which we exist.

This is a simple enough thing to say; a far more difficult one to embody. Striving to attain wisdom takes clear eyes, hard work, a virtuous heart, and diligent self-awareness. But it is waiting along each Mason’s path. ♦

WISE AND SERIOUS TRUTHS

LESSONS OF WISDOM ABOUND, BUT IT IS UP TO US TO APPLY THEM

By John L. Cooper III, Past Grand Master

Much has been written about Masonic wisdom. Take this example from the “California Monitor”:

Tools and implements of architecture most expressive are selected by the Fraternity to imprint upon the memory wise and serious truths; and thus, through the succession of ages, are transmitted unimpaired the most excellent tenets of our Institution.

And yet, despite the great amount of research in this area, and the realization of its importance, wisdom is sometimes hard to pass down. Solomon, King of Israel, was reputed to have been one of the wisest rulers in history. His wisdom is legendary, and some of it is enshrined in the book of the Bible attributed to him, “The Proverbs of Solomon.” Chapter 7 of that book (Prov. 7:1-4) includes a saying attributed to King Solomon as advice to his son, Rehoboam:

*My child, keep my words
And store up my commandments with you;
Keep my commandments and live,
Keep my teachings as the apple of your eye;
Bind them on your fingers,
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,”
And call insight your intimate friend.*

Despite this impassioned plea, upon the death of Solomon, Rehoboam ascended the throne of Israel, and ignored his father’s

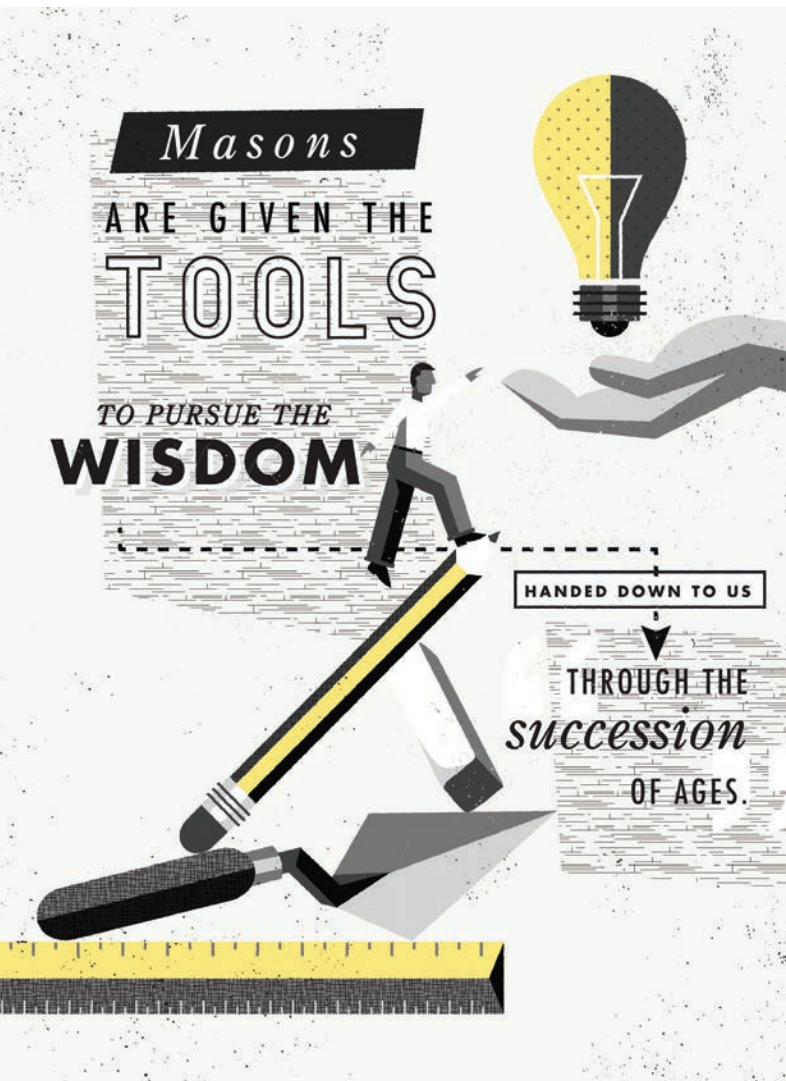
advice. We find this story in the First Book of Kings, Chapter 12. In that story, as the new king, Rehoboam is asked by the people to lighten the burdens that his father had placed on them. Solomon had been a very popular king, and had made Israel into a great nation. There was a cost to this, of course, but the people had been willing to bear it for the sake of Solomon’s achievements. They did not believe there were sufficient advantages to continue to do so for his son, and thus they asked Rehoboam if he would lighten their load.

Rehoboam sought the advice of the Elders of Israel, who advised him to rethink the heaviness of the burdens, and to make himself more acceptable to the people. He then also sought the advice of some of the other young people with whom he had grown up, and they advised him of the opposite: to keep the heavy burdens on the people. Rehoboam chose to take the latter advice, and told the people – with a great deal of arrogance:

*Now whereas my father laid on you
a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke.
My father disciplined you with whips,
but I will discipline you with scorpions. (1 Kings 12:11)*

This was a big mistake. The exiled general, Jeroboam, returned from Egypt and initiated a rebellion against Rehoboam. At its conclusion, the ten tribes in the north split off into a separate country, and

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Rehoboam was left with a tiny portion of his father's former kingdom. The wise King Solomon had been unable to hand down any of his wisdom to his son, and as a result, his powerful and prestigious kingdom – and his legacy – were destroyed.

Wisdom is notoriously difficult to hand on to others. As more than one wag has said,

“Experience is what you get just after you need it!” Most of us say this immediately after we have ignored sound advice from others, or failed to look at the entire picture carefully before proceeding. It is here that the teachings of Freemasonry might be of some help.

In the lecture of the Fellow Craft degree we are told that Freemasonry hands down “wise and serious truths” through the “tools and implements of architecture.” One of the most important of these is the trowel, a tool presented to a new Master Mason. He is told that the trowel is:

... an instrument made use of by operative Masons to spread the cement which unites the building into one common mass; but we, as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection; that cement which unites us into one sacred band or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.

A Master Mason is expected to be a leader. But, his effectiveness, both as a leader and as one who imparts wisdom, is based on his brethren's opinion of him. If he is perceived as selfish, it won't be long before others stop following him. But if his brothers regard him as someone who cares more about them than about himself, he will soon be recognized and trusted by them, and accepted as a leader. For the Master Mason, the trowel is significant as a tool to build his lodge into “one sacred band... of friends and brothers.” This is a skill that can be learned, and the heart of it is that: “noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.”

King Solomon seems to have known about the use of the trowel, or at least his leadership reflected such knowledge. His son, Rehoboam, didn't quite get it, and he lost his father's kingdom. Masons are given the tools to pursue the wisdom handed down to us “through the succession of ages.” All we need to do – is use them! ♦

THE ART AND SYMBOLS OF WISDOM

THE IDEAL OF MASONIC WISDOM IS DISPLAYED IN THE SYMBOLOGY OF THE MASONIC LODGE

As the Masonic hall is a place where transformative learning takes place, the objects, iconography, and decorations contained within its walls are rich in symbols that allude to the Masonic ideal of wisdom.

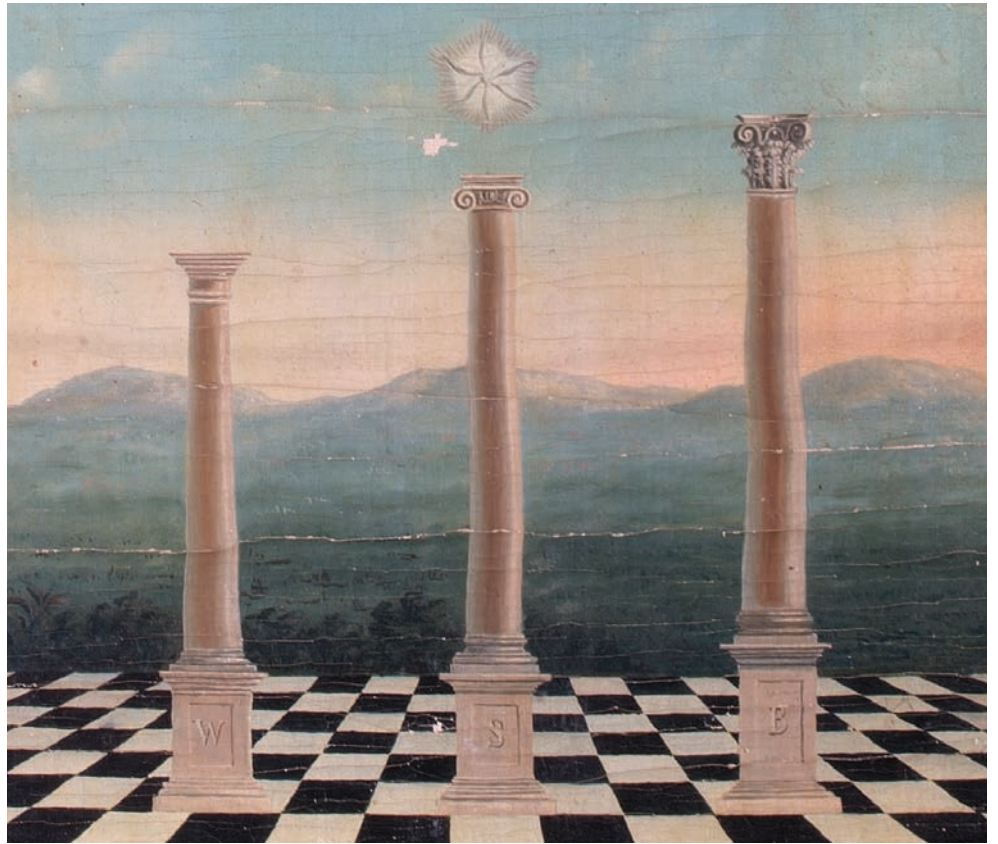
The first of the three columns is the **ionic column**, which is representative of wisdom. It is symbolically located in the east – the place of light – nearest to the lodge master. Positioned with the Doric column, symbolizing strength, and the Corinthian column, symbolizing beauty, the Ionic column's construction embodies the best assets of the other two.

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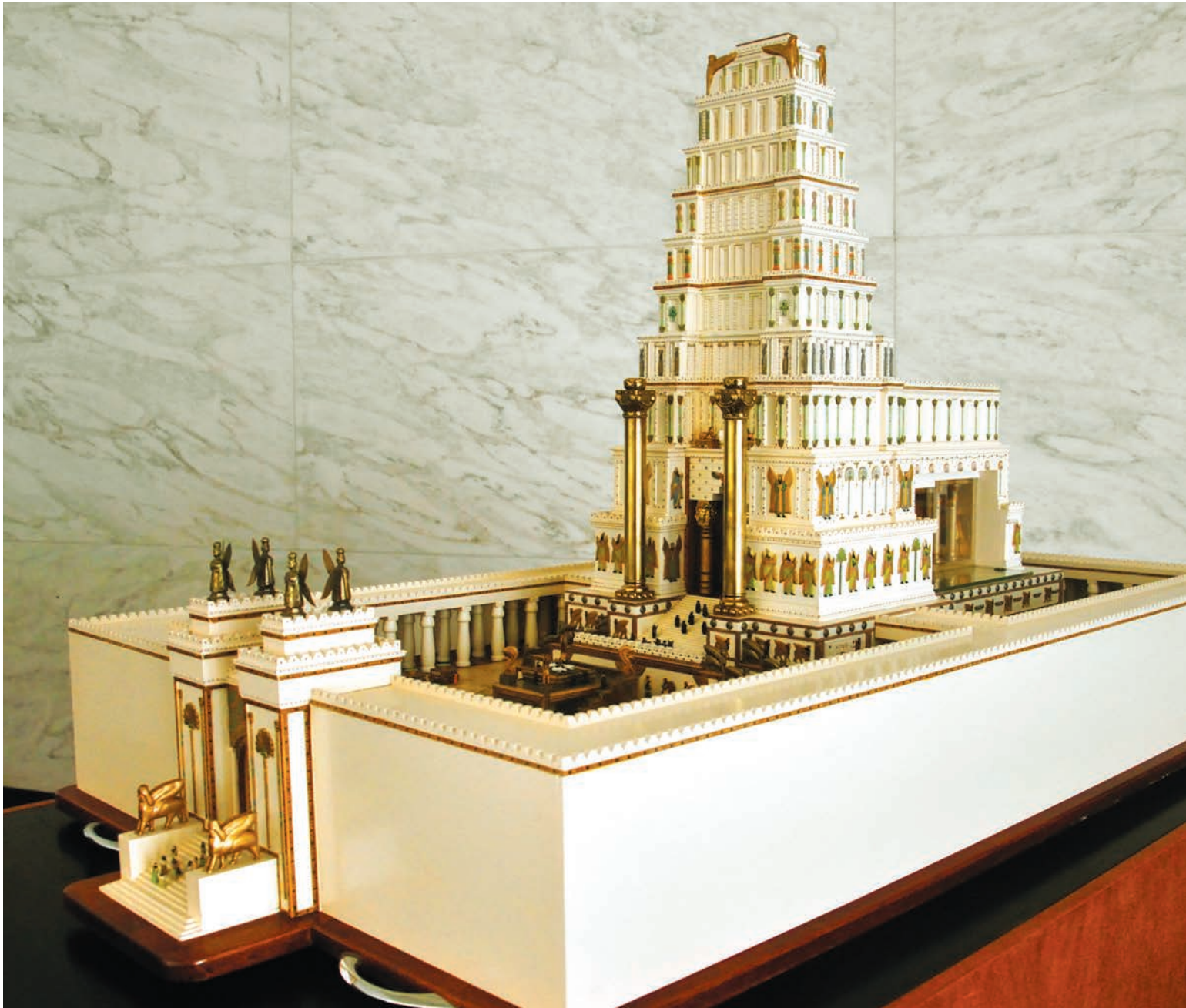
HISTORY

The **blazing star** is an emblem of faith. It represents the omniscient knowledge of the Supreme Being and the presence of divine wisdom.



Images of **King Solomon** are emblematic of Masonic wisdom. According to 1 Kings 4:30-32, "Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of all children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men..." In the Bible, his legacy is espoused through the Proverbs, among which is this example of his exultation of wisdom:

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand: and in her left hand riches and honor.



Along with King Solomon, **Solomon's Temple** also symbolizes wisdom. Constructed over seven years, and unused for another 13, the mythological resting place of the Ark of the Covenant is a metaphor for perfection of workmanship; the quest to perfect one's character is synonymous with the desire for wisdom.

Continued next page

HISTORY



The **rough and perfect ashlars**, used in the Entered Apprentice degree, symbolize the transformation of a Mason through his Masonic journey – as he gains wisdom and becomes a more enlightened man.



WEB EXTRA

Learn more about holy writings in Freemasonry by viewing the original documentary film, [“The Holy Writings.”](#) on the [Masons of California YouTube channel](#).



The **holy writings**, placed on the altar, represent the written, revealed word – a timeless source of divine wisdom. ✧

WRITING THE INNER SELF

MASONIC HOME
RESIDENTS USE
POETRY TO REVISIT
MEMORIES AND
UNLOCK EXPERIENCES

By Laura Benys

This past spring, tucked in a room at the Masonic Home at Union City, a group of 10 residents and staff gathered around tables, writing. Two pairs of women, each with one elder and one younger, sat off to the side, the two elder women speaking quietly; the younger women carefully writing down their words. Two teachers wound among the tables, leaning down to read a line, ask a question, and give encouragement. This was poetry in the making.

Reflection and creation

That springtime gathering was a poetry workshop – the fourth so far at the Home – led by Helen Shoemaker and Janice DeRuiter Eskridge, long-time friends and coauthors of “Leaping Off Into Space: A Travel Guide to Risk and the Imagination.” The workshops pull from each woman’s expertise: Shoemaker is a licensed marriage and family therapist, and a psychology programs director at Holy Names University in Oakland. Eskridge is a published poet and poetry teacher, with a master’s degree in fine arts. A few years ago, they combined forces

Continued next page

BITTER — Jim WARD LITTER

The trash that litters our ocean floor
started forming at Columbus’s shore.
Since 1492, the ships who on the ocean sail
have been depositing it by bail and bale!

They clean their ships from deck to deck
even small gatherings equal a peck.
The ships that sailed in 1492 were very small
in 1992 just a few will equal them all.

Each day they sail the ocean blue
depositing debris as they gracefully do.
These daily droppings slowly disappear from view,
and the ocean bottom rises toward me and you.

If we do not change our way of life,
we’ll need not worry about storm or strife.
When bottom of the ocean meets the top
our world as we know it will surely stop.

WEB EXTRA: WORDS OF WISDOM

The Masonic Homes in Union City and Covina – as well as Acacia Creek – all have 90s or 90+ clubs – groups of residents who celebrate their vitality and friendship as nonagenarians, and beyond. Visit the Masons of California YouTube channel to view a video with words of wisdom from members of Covina’s 90+ club.



to co-create the workshop. Shoemaker had spent time at the Union City Home when her mother-in-law was a resident, and admired the expansive activities programming. So, she and Eskridge decided to approach the Home about sharing their expertise through a resident workshop. Shortly after, the first session was held, in July 2014.

Shoemaker, the psychologist, opens each workshop with a guided mindfulness meditation, designed to distance the participants from their everyday thoughts and settle them in a peaceful, reflective moment. She introduces the topic that they will explore that day, such as empathy, pain, or childhood. Then Eskridge, the poet, steps up. She reads a poem or presents an image inspired by the day’s topic. She talks about the writing process, and the unstructured freedom of poetry. Over the next hour, residents create poetry, then share it with each other.

One resident, Carole Boyes, is a returning student. She’d spent a semester in one of Shoemaker’s university classes while pursuing a human development degree. One of the activities that Shoemaker used in that class, and still uses, was journaling. Boyes kept it up, for many of the same reasons she enjoyed the poetry workshop.

“It helps you to process what your feelings are, and it helps you to focus your life,” Boyes says. “I think the poetry workshop was designed to be the same way – to draw out your inner self somehow, and put it down on paper.”

Seeking wonder

When Eskridge’s mother was terminally ill some years ago, Eskridge used poetry to process the experience and find some peace in it. On the long drive home after visits, she would often pull over to the side of the road to write.

“Of all writing vehicles,” Eskridge says, “poetry depends most on visual imagination and on free association – putting unusual images together and letting yourself write about topics that pop into your head, which may not have anything to do with logic. Poetry allows the poet to gain some distance over a difficult journey or to rejoice in the wonder of life, or to simply observe the people and the world we live with and in.”

One of the residents in the workshop, M. “Jim” Ward, is familiar with this leap from observation to inspiration. Throughout his life, he’s written poems about his experiences and beliefs: a poem about hobos he met as a boy; another about a beloved cat; another, “Snowflake,” written for his daughter in 10 minutes flat.

“When my wife and I traveled, she was always picking out beautiful things; that was how she expressed herself,” Ward says. “I expressed myself through poetry.”

Ward has enjoyed watching other residents discover poetry through the workshop. “One is an old Marine warrior, and he seems to be enjoying it immensely,” Ward says. “He didn’t seem to do a lot of writing of poetry before, but he expresses himself well. Another fellow shared how he took care of his mother for seven years before her death, and how caring for her was a high point of his life.”

Juliette Peters, the Home’s recreation specialist, helped bring the workshops to the campus and has attended all of them. Sometimes she works on her own poem, but more often she acts as a scribe for residents who need help writing down their words.

"They come out with these amazing poems that are real and raw," says Peters. "It's a chance for us to see each other in a different light. If residents don't share a lunch table or the same social circles, they might not know each other very well. But through their poems, they discover each other's emotions."

Wisdom and discovery

At every workshop, Peters delights in the reactions she hears around the room – "That was really good," or, "Oh wow, I can't believe I wrote that." "Surprising yourself is one of the biggest advantages of the class," she says. "You might think you can't write a poem at all, or even write about a particular topic, but then you discover that you can."

Shoemaker and Eskridge have been deeply moved by the residents' response to the workshops. "We have shared laughter and tears and the struggle to get words onto paper," says Eskridge. As Shoemaker puts it, the classes produce "incredible expressed memories, full of meanings: peace, joy, sorrow, laughter, and tears."

Growing old doesn't mean you stop growing and developing, says Shoemaker and Eskridge. "A mind that still discovers is a mind that stays alive and alert," Shoemaker explains. It's also about tapping into an inner wisdom that's often neglected in day-to-day life. Through writing and sharing poetry, she says, "we can continue to discover new things about ourselves, each other, and the world we all live in together." ♦

ON SOLID GROUND



Every time I leave you ask,
Why do you do so much for me?

It is a natural part of the order passing
from Mother to daughter.
Now my sons must catch the pieces of glory falling.
There is a burst of freedom
In knowing how to be a part of this:
our line of descent.
I know that mothers sing
the rhyming songs of circle games
and take movies of small hands picking grass.
I've seen you dressed in jeans,
boots and a low, worn, brown felt hat driving
the old green truck down the orchard rows.
Grandmothers can separate
rattlers' bodies from their heads
with one whack of a hoe
and fathers can untangle
blonde curls and grandfathers
cook a Sunday dinner and tell stories
about Texas cowboys and buy
double holster sets for my two silver guns.
You let me dress for school
in jeans, a red flannel shirt
and cowboy boots that made a satisfying sound
running down the stairs.
I carry bursts of glory in my pockets.
Now, I'm giving back.

— *Janice DeRuiter*

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