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THIS ISSUE'S HAND-ILLUSTRATED COVER REFLECTS THE CREATIVE, HANDCRAFTED PURSUITS OF THE MASONS PROFILED WITHIN. SHOWN HERE IS THE RUNNER-UP COVER: GRAPHICS INSPIRED BY CLASSIC PROPAGANDA POSTERS SHOW MEN FULLY ENGAGED IN THEIR CHOSEN CRAFTS.

2

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

Junior Grand Warden Stuart A. Wright explains the connection between the desire to create and the will to reimagine and better oneself through Freemasonry.

3


FROM ROUGH CUT TO PERFECTION

Modern Masonic woodcarvers reveal what inspires their creative drive and the parallels they've found between their art and their fraternity.

6

MEMBER PROFILE: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

One brother has led an inspiring life, from the Covina Children's Home to a successful career in business and impactful philanthropic endeavors.



11

THE MODERN MASONIC MAKER

Since the beginning, Freemasonry has captured the minds and hearts of some of the most imaginative men of each generation. Though far removed from the stonemasons who envisioned and built Europe's grand cathedrals, the desire to create something new, beautiful, and impactful carries through to present day.



8 DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY

Throughout California, brothers are thinking creatively to reimagine what it means to be a lodge – and what they're looking for when they don their aprons.

20 CREATIVE SPIRIT IN ONE SNAPSHOT

Masonic youth share their creative passions in our first-ever Instagram contest.

21 MASONIC EDUCATION: WISDOM, STRENGTH, AND BEAUTY

Past Grand Master John L. Cooper III explains why our stonemason ancestors believed that beauty was an integral component of "all great and important undertakings."

24 BEYOND THE DRAWING BOARD

When the Masonic Homes set out to improve resident memory care, it was with collaboration, foresight, and imagination.

28 MASTER OF EFFECTS

From cult-classic films to television and commercials, one brother is using his creative talent in Hollywood – armed with the lessons of the craft.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN STUART A. WRIGHT SPENDS HIS FREE TIME VOLUNTEERING WITH THE CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL.

While traveling around the state, I have been honored to meet and shake hands with many wonderful folks. These hands do and create great things – from woodworking and metal work, to sculpting clay products. They are hands at work in medicine, law, government, and business. All our brothers are creative in one way or another: Tools in their hands are productive, imaginative, creative, and sensitive.

Our tools in the fraternity, such as the square, level, and plumb, provide an impressive tie to the lives of men in all vocations, but after we knock on the door of Freemasonry, they take on new and different meanings. Afterwards, when we see these tools used in the speculative way, we understand their power in backing up the tenants of our craft: brotherly love, relief, and truth. Just as these tools in the hands of keen craftsmen turn out marvelous artistic and secular products, so it follows that we, too, can become “great products” as we utilize our Masonic teachings to transform our rough ashlar into – as close as we can – perfect ones. What satisfaction we gain in knowing that each of us has become our own craftsman as a result of membership in the oldest and greatest fraternity in the world.

As we select a specific tool for each job ahead, and as we place that tool in our hand, let us think about all the lessons we have learned throughout our Masonic journeys. My hand in yours and yours in mine establishes that unique bond that ties us to each other through our fraternity.

Stuart A. Wright, Junior Grand Warden

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FROM ROUGH CUT TO PERFECTION

THREE BROTHERS FIND MASONIC CONNECTIONS
WITHIN THE ART OF WOODCARVING

By Julie Bifano Boe

In garages and workshops throughout California, master woodcarvers are at work. More than an artistic endeavor, their craft involves a great deal of talent and many years of experience. They must gain a thorough understanding of varieties of wood and the numerous types of tools needed to produce their desired results. They must train themselves to sculpt and finish the wood with these tools, transforming a raw material into something beautiful.

An appropriate metaphor will likely come to mind for Freemasons: the Masonic journey itself. As Entered Apprentices, Masons learn the importance of taking a

rough ashlar, an imperfect stone, and turning it into a perfect ashlar – a level stone, finished and smooth. This is also an allegory of how an uninitiated man transforms into a Mason who has committed to enter a path towards enlightenment, seeking to “perfect” himself through the teachings of Freemasonry. By creating masterful woodwork with their hands, three Masons are paying tribute to the operative and metaphorical traditions of Freemasonry, while enriching their communities and society.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



BRO. WILLIAM BIDDELL ENJOYS THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF WOODCARVING - FROM SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT MEDIUM TO POLISHING THE FINISHED PROJECT.



MASONIC ROOTS AND TRADITION

William Biddell, a Mason for more than 53 years, secretary of Menlo Park Lodge No. 651, and tiler of Crow Canyon Lodge No. 551, has worked with wood his entire life. As he says, "If it's wooden and round, I'm your man!" After retiring in 2000, Biddell took a class in wood turning and soon bought a lathe. He quickly became passionate about his hobby, even building a woodshop in his backyard. Since then, he has contributed a variety of handmade wooden Masonic tools and decorations to a number of lodges.

Biddell creates stands for the three lesser lights - which are placed near the altar to represent the sun, moon, and worshipful master - from maple or pine, stained with red oak. Depending on the lodge, they can be used with real or battery-operated candles. He has also created more than 20 gavels for incoming masters in hammer, vertical, and setting maul styles. The gavels are usually two inches in diameter and seven inches long, but each is one of a

kind. Although the gavels tend to be composed of walnut, part of Biddell's artistic process involves surveying his scrap wood to decide whether he will use a more traditional wood, like oak, maple, or walnut, or a more exotic variety, like South American lignum vitae. Like the gavels, each piece of wood is unique. "I like imperfections in wood," Biddell says. "You can take something that is ugly and transform it into something beautiful."

Biddell appreciates that his work helps to enhance candidates' ritual experience. When he noticed that non-memorized sections of the ritual were being read from a binder during ceremonies, he designed his first wooden secretary scroll to make the experience more authentic. Since then, several other lodges have requested scrolls and Biddell has gone on to build more than a hundred scroll ends - assembling the rods using wooden dowels. He has also crafted bowls, platters, clocks, vases, brush handles, pens, and a spinning wheel.

He says, "Some Masons these days do not work with their hands, but in the old days they did. I like having a connection to Masonic roots and traditions."

AN APPRECIATION FOR ARTISAN CRAFTS

Nick Masseria, an Entered Apprentice at Victorville Lodge No. 634 also finds that his woodworking art is closely linked to his identity as a Mason. "Masons are artisans," he says, "and we are all trying to help better society." Like Biddell, he enjoys using his skill to give back to his lodge. Currently, he is working on a wooden framing system that will store past masters' frames and gavels. One of his future goals is to construct a wooden shrine for brothers who have passed away.

Masseria started working with wood back in high school, when he had the opportunity to meet Sam Maloof, one of the top woodworkers in the United States. Inspired, he purchased a lathe and started carving a variety of objects, from

flashlights and fondue forks to headphone holders – and his specialty today, pens. He believes that every pen he creates reveals its own story, and that the grain in the wood he chooses helps him determine the character each pen will possess. Although his favorite woods are exotic, such as cocobolo, African blood wood, and zebrawood, he also uses domestic varieties – including oak from the inside of retired alcohol barrels. The inside of the barrels are scorched to infuse the alcohol with certain flavors, and those marks are visible on the pens, giving them each a unique appearance.

The pen itself symbolizes something powerful to Masseria: connection and legacy, to society and within the fraternity. “Even though we live in an age of wireless keyboards, speech-to-text processors, and a million other forms of communication, everyone still needs a pen,” he

points out. As a craftsman, Masseria finds great satisfaction in creating objects that can be used in everyday life, by others and by himself. “There’s nothing quite like the feeling of writing with a pen I made,” he says.

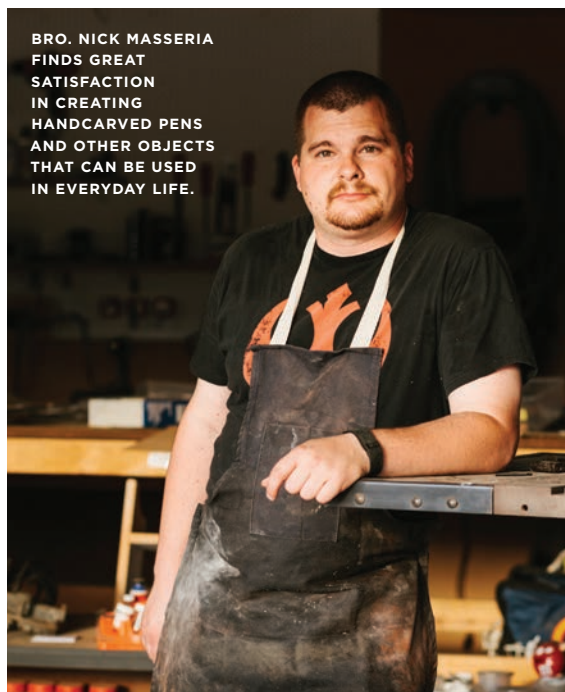
APPRECIATING FOUND BEAUTY

Fred Tomlin, past master of Six Rivers Lodge No. 106 and past District 101 inspector for a decade, has been a woodworker for more than 40 years. He builds and sells furniture – including wooden tables, coffee tables, side tables, wall hangings, and plant stands – exclusively crafted from California-sourced woods. His work has been sold at galleries from San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf to Sedona, Arizona.

Tomlin personally sources the raw materials from which his furniture is made, scouring riverbeds, the desert, forests,

and the beach, searching for pieces to match his vision. This adventuring is a rewarding aspect of his artistic process. “Detaching from technology gets us back to our grass roots – and I have to escape,” he says. He appreciates the unique identity of each piece of wood and is particularly drawn to burls, which create patterns in the grain. He has discovered California horse chestnut burls up to 2,000 years old.

Tomlin compares the nature of the aged wood in which he works to the timeless labor of Freemasons. “I enjoy the creativity involved in taking something that is raw and natural and turning it into a thing of beauty that is also practical,” he says. Like the operative stonemasons who worked hundreds of years before him, the process of selecting raw materials, seeing their potential, and using them to build something enduring is endlessly rewarding. Biddell finishes each piece by placing the Masonic square and compass logo next to his signature. It’s a marker that signifies to him and to those who buy his creations that Freemasonry’s creative spirit carries on. ♦



BRO. NICK MASSERIA FINDS GREAT SATISFACTION IN CREATING HANDCARVED PENS AND OTHER OBJECTS THAT CAN BE USED IN EVERYDAY LIFE.



MEMBER PROFILE

An Entrepreneurial Spirit

MEET CAL JOHNSTON
BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS PIONEER
FORMER COVINA CHILDREN'S
HOME RESIDENT
MASON FOR 55 YEARS

By Laura Benys

In 1938, Cal Johnston arrived at the doorstep of the Masonic Children's Home at Covina.* He was six years old. His life so far had been marked by tragedy: At age three, his father was killed in a car accident. At age four, his mother passed away, orphaning him and his older brother and sister. For the previous two years, he had been shuffled among foster homes, separated from his siblings.

All that hard luck was about to change. When Johnston arrived at Covina, it was to live there – reunited with his siblings – for the rest of his childhood and young adult life. His grandfather had been a Freemason, and his father was applying for membership before his death. The fraternity kept its promise to them, stepping in to care for the children when they were at their most vulnerable.

Johnston says that growing up at Covina was an empowering experience, filled with activities, education, and a sense of community. All the children were assigned campus responsibilities; Johnston remembers tending to the Home's 300-some

chickens, amazing the younger children as the birds lay eggs right into his hands. He remembers being entrusted to run errands in town. "The Masonic Home taught all of us that you have to take responsibility," Johnston says. "We became very self-sufficient early."

The Home's superintendent at the time, Robert Henry, was a formative influence. "He told us that we could do whatever we wanted," Johnston recalls. "He was really the one who pushed me to go to college." Johnston attended Henry's alma mater, the University of Southern California, with the help of a Masonic scholarship.

After college and a stint in the Air Force, Johnston joined Santa



Monica-Palisades Lodge No. 307. He was just finding his way into a real estate career, and figuring out his path in the world. In some ways, his lodge brothers filled the role Robert Henry once held, taking time to educate him personally. "I found a lot of moral support there," Johnston says.

Today, his ingenuity has shaped entire communities: His real estate firm and research group have been involved in everything from apartment housing to Six Flags theme parks to \$150 million in business and industrial parks. He has also shaped



the lives of thousands of children. For the past 16 years, he has partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, a national organization that provides mentoring and after-school activities to millions of children.

"When I got involved in the Boys & Girls Clubs, it was because I thought it was time I started giving back from my experience with the Masonic Homes," Johnston says.

Some 4,500 children in the Greater Conejo Valley have access to Boys & Girls Clubs programming thanks to Johnston and his wife, Marje. They

built the community's program from scratch, and have worked more than a decade to establish seven Clubhouses. Johnston developed a "suburban initiative" model, forming partnerships with local school districts to place Clubhouses right on school grounds. Next on Johnston's plate are Clubhouses in metropolitan Los Angeles; he is helping an initiative that aims to nearly triple the number of children served in the area to 20,000 by 2020. Once again, his vision and commitment will give thousands of children what the Masons gave

him: encouragement, education, and a consistent source of support.

"Kids need to learn to be not only creative, but persistent. You don't give up; you just figure out a way," Johnston says. "That's something the Masonic Homes taught me." ♦

**Editor's note: The Masonic Homes operated a children's residential program in Covina until 2009, when children's services were transformed to better meet the needs of Masonic families.*

Dwelling Together in Unity

BY ENVISIONING NEW LODGES, BROTHERS
THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA ARE EXPLORING THE
CHANGING NATURE OF THE MODERN FRATERNITY

By Antone R.E. Pierucci



RICHARD LEWIS (LEFT) OF HARDING
SAN JUAN LODGE NO. 579, AND R.
MICHAEL RODNEY (RIGHT), SENIOR
DEACON OF ROSEVILLE LODGE NO. 222,
ARE AMONG BROTHERS WORKING TO
CREATE A TRADITIONAL OBSERVANCE
LODGE IN THE SACRAMENTO AREA.

“A lodge is just an extension of its members,” says Jordan Yelinek, director of lodge development and training for the Grand Lodge of California. It’s a concept that can sometimes be difficult to grasp. Lodges’ mystique can make them seem unalterable – that they always were and forever will be as they are today. As part of Grand Lodge’s 2020 Fraternity Plan though, Yelinek is helping members reenvision what it means to be a lodge. As brothers share their visions for their fraternity, lodges, and Masonic experiences, occasionally the germ of an idea is born – and with it, a new lodge.



LEFT TO RIGHT: PAST GRAND MASTER R. STEPHEN DOAN; JEFFREY SCHIMSKY, GRAND BIBLE BEARER AND SECRETARY OF LOS CERRITOS LODGE NO. 674; AND STEFAN DOOMANIS, PAST SENIOR GRAND STEWARD AND MASTER OF OLD WEST LODGE NO. 813.

A DEEPER MASONIC EXPERIENCE

One evening in 2013, after a tired meeting of Penrhyn Gold Hill Lodge No. 32, Tom McCarthy, then an officer and now past master, and Peter Ackeret, then the lodge’s master and now California’s grand pursuivant, settled down for a visit. Ackeret brought up Traditional Observance lodges – those that aim to enhance members’ experience through a high standard of initiatic rituals, including the chamber of reflection and required degree papers, and ornate, formal meals following each meeting. This wasn’t the men’s first discussion of Traditional Observance lodges, but that night they

contemplated starting one of their own in the Sacramento area. In 2015, they took action on their dream, looking to lodges like Academia Lodge No. 847, Prometheus Lodge No. 851, and Paideia Lodge No. 852 for inspiration. Aquila Lodge, as the men hope to name it, will be “unapologetically a lodge for Masons,” Ackeret says. While blue lodges encourage Masonic education, Aquila Lodge will prioritize it. The lessons of Masonry are not only contained within the three degrees, Ackeret points out. Although a Master Mason is given all the light of Masonry, it is only through continued reflection that this light can greatly impact his

life. McCarthy and Ackeret believe that an emphasis on lifelong Masonic education will be appealing.

In Fresno, brothers hope to tap into prospective members’ educational experiences in order to cultivate new and deeper Masonic ones. Seeking to be the first California lodge established in this century under the United Grand Lodge of England’s university lodge model, Regius University Lodge U.D. will tailor the Masonic experience to university students and faculty, making Masonry accessible to the next generation through on-campus degrees and lodge meetings. Similar to Harvard Lodge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, “this lodge will cultivate an enjoyable Masonic experience at universities that students will take along with them long after graduation,” says Yelinek.

BEYOND LODGE WALLS

Physical lodge structures have been a central part of the Masonic experience for Chris Holme, past grand marshal and past master of North Hollywood Lodge No. 542 in Los Angeles. One of his first interactions with Freemasonry involved helping his father-in-law to repair a lodge building. Later, after becoming a Mason himself, North Hollywood Lodge lost their building following the 1994 Northridge earthquake. The financial onus placed on the lodge as a result left its mark on Holme, and today, together with 18 brothers, he plans to create a lodge free from the fetters of a physical structure. The proposed lodge, which Holme describes as a “less burdened approach,” would meet at the

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

Create a lodge in THREE EASY STEPS!



IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN CREATING A NEW LODGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY, IT'S EASY TO GET STARTED. HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

1. Fifteen California Master Masons in good standing
2. Of the fifteen, three must be willing to serve as leading officers (a master, junior warden, and senior warden)
3. A location suitable to hold a lodge (This can be an existing Masonic lodge or another space that is deemed appropriate.)

For assistance with starting a lodge in your community, contact Director of Lodge Development and Training Jordan Yelinek at jyelinek@freemason.org or (415) 292-9101.

LA Athletic Club. With features like restaurants, a bar, and comfortable lounging spaces for members' wives and children, the LA Athletic Club will negate building maintenance and allow members to concentrate on more important things, like being "a central hub of a social group." An added bonus is returning Freemasonry to downtown Los Angeles. A growing number of residents live and socialize downtown. Located near trendy entertainment and shopping venues, and accessible by public transportation, the new lodge will reflect the population it hopes to attract. There

are still some logistics to be worked out, including holding meetings in a room not dedicated to ritual, but in the coming weeks, Holme and his brothers hope to submit their proposal to Grand Lodge.

SHARED SPACES

In Benicia, rather than negating the lodge building, members are seeking to breathe new life into a treasured historic structure. Benicia Masonic Hall, the oldest Masonic hall in California, was built in 1850, just a few months after California became a state. The Benicia community has a

good number of Masons, but, Yelinek explains, they are a "commuter population" of brothers who live in Benicia but belong to lodges in other communities. Originally home to two lodges, over time, brothers' conflicting priorities led to tensions and both lodges shuttered. Today, groups of local Masons are working together to bring not one, but two lodges back to the historic Benicia Masonic Hall. By accommodating multiple lodges in a single space, brothers can reduce overhead expenses while enjoying the historic lodge hall. One lodge intends to focus on socialization and community service; the other seeks to focus on excellence in ritual. Both, says Yelinek, are working to be the best lodge they can be. "We're fostering collaboration while encouraging brothers to create lodges that reflect the member experience in ways that are meaningful to them," he says.

The desire to create the new lodges tends to be less the result of a divine spark of inspiration than a simple desire to fill a need. For Ackeret, the role of the lodge in Masonic education is a "hunger" that he hopes Aquila Lodge will satiate. For Holme, the need to have a Masonic experience devoted to philanthropy and brotherhood can only be addressed by releasing the lodge from physical confines. And in Fresno and Benicia, members are filling additional needs. In all cases, creative Masonic thinkers are seeking to maintain the tenets of the fraternity while ensuring it stays relevant. The end result, explains Yelinek, will be a deeper and more rewarding experience for today's California Masons. ♦

THE MODERN MASONIC MAKER

BY MARK FRAUENFELDER

CONTEMPORARY MASONIC ARTISANS & VISIONARIES
DEMONSTRATE THAT A PASSION FOR ENVISIONING
AND CREATING ARTFUL OBJECTS AND INNOVATIVE CONCEPTS
IS ALIVE AND WELL IN CALIFORNIA FREEMASONRY

For people who choose to make things, the process is often as important as what is being made. The push to produce something beautiful, something significant, is what brings the creative spirit to life.

Making is about being an active participant in the environment in which you live. It's about

designing, modifying, and repairing things to suit your needs. And, it's about the process of improving the world around you – for yourself, your family and friends, and for your community.

Today's speculative Masons don't typically build cathedrals, but their devotion to craft and to their fraternity is continuing a legacy of creativity and drive that nods to the past while inspiring generations to come.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Mark Frauenfelder is research director of the Institute for the Future, editor-in-chief of Cool-Tools.org, co-founder of Boing Boing, and founding editor-in-chief of MAKE magazine. A longtime contributor and former editor of WIRED magazine, he was the founding editor of Wired.com. He is also the author of eight books.

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A LOST ART FOR A NEW CENTURY



Walking into the Aesthetic Union is like going back in time 100 years. Unlike most modern print shops, you won't find much digital technology in this San Francisco Mission District establishment. Instead, you'll see tools of the ancient trade of letterpress, a type of printing invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century. The shop is dominated by three letterpress machines, including a cast iron 1952 Heidelberg Cylinder Press, made in Germany and lovingly maintained by James Tucker, junior deacon of Prometheus Lodge No. 851 in San Francisco and the Aesthetic Union's proprietor.



It's fitting that Tucker looks like he belongs in the heyday of letterpress. Bearded and bespectacled, he wears a fashionably ink-stained apron with a ruler and mechanical pencil in the pockets. Tucker has a deep appreciation for handcrafts, and for the past. "I wanted to be a graphic designer when I started school," he says, "but I realized I didn't want to sit behind a desk and computer screen all day. I wanted to make things with my hands." When he learned about letterpress in 2005 or so, he realized that it was what he had been looking for.

Letterpress printing involves applying ink to a raised surface, such as artwork or letters, then pressing paper on that surface to make a print. Because letterpress printers are complicated and finicky, Tucker says, "you have to be part mechanic and part craftsman."



To learn the ins and outs of his chosen trade, he turned to an age-old learning method familiar to Masons – an apprenticeship with a local print shop. “I believe in apprenticing and learning from the older generation, and then taking what you’ve learned to do your own thing,” Tucker says.

Letterpress printing still operates on the apprentice, journeyman, master system, Tucker explains. “Much like guilds, we usually have a couple apprentices working in the shop at one time. They get hands-on experience with printing as well as business operations – like client relations and ordering materials.” It’s a lot to take on in the course of three months. “Compared to the standard 10 year apprenticeships back in the 18th century, there’s a lot to learn in a short amount of time,” he says.

In 2013, Tucker was ready to launch his own shop. But rather than slipping into the wedding invitation trade, as many letterpress operators do, he chose to focus on art books and “amazing avant-garde ways of conveying information.” His inspiration drew

from artists in the past century who, at the advent of offset printers, began using discarded letterpress printers as a medium for artistic projects. They were attracted by letterpress machines’ crisp, distinctive look, and tolerance for thicker, textured paper – and how economical it was to acquire them. “Artists went to scrapyards and hung out near newspaper print shops to gather old machines and parts,” says Tucker. “That’s when a revolution of small publishing began.” Tucker sees his shop as a continuation of that line. “It uses old machines, not manufactured anymore, to create new ways to share information and see the world,” he says.

Printmaking has long been a collaboration between artists without print knowledge and the printers who produce their work. This partnership even helped inspire the Aesthetic Union’s name. “I work directly with the artists,” says Tucker. “I produce my own designs, as well as theirs, and help them with the presses.” He also offers artist residencies, studio tours, author readings, and other creative-minded events.



A Master Mason since 2013, Tucker says the “human-to-human contact and being a better person,” aspects of Freemasonry, as well as its focus on mentorship, closely parallel his role at the Aesthetic Union. “Right next to my press on my ink cabinet I have the two gifts that were given to me as an Entered Apprentice in my lodges: a rough and perfect ashlar – a rough stone and a perfect stone. I see them as a reminder of my Masonic goals every day.” ♦



THE BRAIN MAKER

The dog quit chasing the rabbit. The hare escaped the hound. As a human, you have no problem understanding that these sentences are similar. But a computer can't link them because the words aren't labeled and organized into a database. Unlike humans, computers can't "think creatively." That's too bad, because most of the world's information is unstructured, putting it out of machines' reach.

Michael Gusek, a Master Mason at Marin Lodge No. 191 in San Rafael, wants to change this. He's the cofounder of Sensai, an artificial intelligence (AI) company working to create a programming language to process unstructured data, like blog posts, news articles, and Internet searches. Sensai's Content Discovery Language (CDL, pronounced "cuddle") searches disparate sources of data and returns relevant documents. It understands synonyms and metaphors, uniting associated data. "I have to think about the data in four dimensions, help the system tease out answers, and identify additional problems to solve as well," says Gusek. "Creativity is essential."

An example of CDL in action is its ability to simplify credit card fraud auditing. Typically when credit card companies identify a suspect

transaction, an analyst must create and submit a profile report on the flagged customer by conducting an online search for suspicious activity. Each report takes almost eight hours to compile – leading to extensive backlogs. CDL is able to automate the process. "We connect to every data source and input the person's name. The AI reviews the data and compiles potentially negative indicators into the government report. It takes minutes."

Gusek's interest in AI was sparked in childhood by the TV show "Knight Rider," about a crime fighter and his thinking, talking car, KITT. "I was not interested in anything except for how KITT talked and how that was going to be possible. I remember turning and looking at my dad and saying, 'Dad, one day we're going to have cars that talk, and I want to be able

to help make that happen.' I did not major in computer science. I majored in psychology because I knew somehow that if the human brain can do it, there's a way to reproduce that process in computer code."

"Past all the science of AI, there is a truly fundamental philosophy about how complex systems, like ourselves, solve problems and deal with knowledge," Gusek says. "The techniques and tools of sensemaking have names. Learning to call upon them in the right order at the right time changes everything." And, he explains, he finds Masonic connections throughout this process. "You'd probably be surprised about how the working tools and symbols of Masonry are linked to the tools and techniques of sensemaking. Freemasonry's vast libraries give me endless volumes of information to explore how strong that link is."

Like his passion for AI, Gusek's attention for Masonry was sparked as a child, by a different car – the tiny ones driven by Shriners in his Massachusetts hometown's parades. When he discovered that Shriners were dedicated philanthropists, he knew he'd fit right in. "Everything about my personality is extremely altruistic. I was probably born to be a Mason," he says.

Will Freemasonry's tenets of brotherly love, relief, and truth someday be translated into the language of machines? It is too soon to tell, but for Gusek, the fascinating challenge of fusing digital and personal connections continues as he forges along his path in AI. Or, as he describes it, "the relentless pursuit of the light of truth and its natural tendency to dispel confusion." ✦

THE PERFECT FIT



Twenty-five years ago, Pascal Davayat was at a crossroads. The young Frenchman had come to Los Angeles to become a rock and roll musician, but shortly after arriving, grunge music came into vogue. With no interest in singing about apathy and existential dread, he had to choose: Would he return home, or stay and try something completely different? That's when he turned to his passion for leatherwork.

"Since I was a kid, I was always doing little leather projects as a hobby," he says. "In 1992, I got a job in a store where I made custom belts and dabbled in boot repair." After working there for four years, he had an epiphany: He had always been absolutely, completely fascinated by cowboy boots. He cut up all his boots to see how they were constructed, reverse-engineered the patterns, and

made his first pair. "Lo and behold, they fit!" he says. The day he finished them, a friend visited and asked for a pair. Soon, the friend wanted another. It was the beginning of a new path.

Davayat's boots are works of art. The hand-tooled and stitched decorative elements are highly detailed, often incorporating country western, biker, rock, and hot rod iconography. His proprietary pigment solution, developed through years of experimentation, penetrates the leather to produce opaque, vibrant tones. "It's really deep in," he explains. "Over time it will keep its color."

His enthusiasm for artisan craft-work bridges another important element of his life: Freemasonry. As a boy growing up in Dallet, a small village on the banks of the Allier River, he was awed by the Clermont-Ferrand Cathedral and fascinated to learn that the stonemasons who built this cathedral and others

throughout Europe had provided a blueprint for Freemasonry.

"I started to read about Freemasonry and my heroes like Isaac Newton – big influences in my life. I appreciated that there is still a group of people who believe your word as something to be trusted." At the time, he felt that French Masons were too aloof, and didn't consider becoming one. But shortly after Davayat arrived in the U.S., a man asked him to make a leather piece with a Masonic square and compass. They became close friends and through him, Davayat learned more about Masonry. He decided to apply and was 46 when he was raised as a Master Mason. Today, he's the marshal of South Pasadena Lodge No. 290.

Like his stonemason forefathers, Davayat doesn't market his work. His made-to-order cowboy boots speak for themselves. "There's no better advertisement than word of mouth," he says. "You make something for

somebody, then somebody sees it and they come find you." He also has a large Instagram following, posting photos of his leatherwork under the name "hollywoodriffraff." Instagram brings in about half of his business. "It's word of mouth on a planetary scale," he says.

Davayat's boots have made him the rock star he dreamed of becoming. Celebrities sport them at the Oscars, Grammys, Golden Globes, and other awards shows. The late Lemmy Kilmister of Motörhead was a loyal customer and friend, and spoke highly of Davayat's work in interviews and documentaries. Notable people throughout the world travel to him for custom boots, which sell for a minimum of \$1,500. He meets them in hotels and even airports, ensuring perfect measurements.

Demand for Davayat's boots is so high that he works 14 hours a day, rolling out of bed and into his garage workshop. He doesn't mind though. "It's an absolute passion, and when I'm not making boots, I miss it," he says. "I even dream about them. I keep a notepad near my bed, and when I wake up at night with ideas, I start sketching them. Each morning, I go to my bench and recreate the dream."

"Confucius supposedly said, 'Experience is a lantern that you carry on your back. It only lights up the road that you already traveled,'" says Davayat. "With every new project I start from zero, a blank piece of leather. Experience steers me away from pitfalls, but every new piece is a challenge" - and a new opportunity to realize his creative vision. ✨





BRIDGING THE UNKNOWN

When asked to describe what inspires him, Russ Hennings doesn't hesitate. "Art is a bridge between the known and the unknown; from experience to spirituality," he says. "It allows you to go deep; to create a different perspective and question the finite."

Hennings – an officer's coach, treasurer, and past master of Saddleback Laguna Lodge No. 672 in Lake Forest, California – has been a photographer for two decades. Today, he works at the world's most beautiful beaches, from the Falkland Islands near the tip of South America to the crystal-clear waters of Tahiti, capturing iconic photographs for an internationally renowned surf brand. It's an art that requires equal parts talent and intuition: precise timing to document the peak action of a moving surfer on a cresting wave, ensuring ideal lighting, and keeping oneself afloat. But Hennings isn't daunted. "Surfing is my favorite thing to photograph. I'm in the elements, one with nature and feeling

the power of everything. It's another universe in the water, and it helps me understand that we are all connected."

This sense of connection is what drew Hennings to Freemasonry. Both sides of his family have been in Masonry since the 1840s; his great-great grandfather had a square and compass on his gravestone. In his early 30s, Hennings asked his father about Masonry and they began attending lodge, together.

The fraternity quickly became a transformative element in his life. He stopped drinking to practice temperance and his career and family life blossomed. "For me, Masonry started as a social club and a way to be closer to my father, but when I got

philosophical and started applying the lessons to myself, I had a breakthrough; I learned that's where the secrets are, and a deeper meaning of how to improve my life," he says.

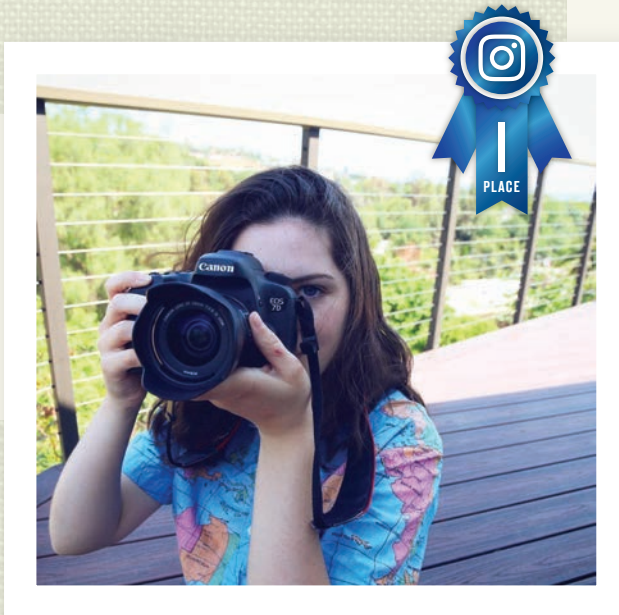
This search for meaning, both internal and shared, continues to weave through Hennings' life and art. "People often ask if I'll move to video, but I like being able to freeze a moment; to focus someone's attention on one place in time. It allows me to show them something different than I could in any other way." ♦

Read California Freemason online for an extended version of this article.

CREATIVE SPIRIT IN ONE SNAPSHOT

KARLY KIMES

CALIFORNIA
RAINBOW FOR GIRLS
ASSEMBLY NO. 231,
BUENA PARK



Throughout California, the young men and women who participate in the Masonic youth orders of DeMolay, Job's Daughters, and Rainbow for Girls devote much of their time to personal development and living Masonic values. They're also passionate individuals for whom creativity provides a healthy outlet and a new lens for exploring the world. In California Freemason's first-ever Instagram contest, Masonic youth shared a photo of themselves in the process of their favorite creative pursuit. Thank you to everyone who participated – and congratulations to the winners!



NALA CHEN

CALIFORNIA RAINBOW FOR GIRLS
ASSEMBLY NO. 5, SAN JOSE



ADDISON LATIOLAIS

CALIFORNIA JOB'S DAUGHTERS
BETHEL NO. 262, VICTORVILLE



Do you or the Masonic youth you mentor have a photo to share? Post it on Instagram and tag @masonsofca.

MASONIC EDUCATION

WISDOM, STRENGTH, AND BEAUTY

Freemasonry teaches its initiates that the fraternity is supported by three great pillars, representing “denominated wisdom, strength, and beauty.” Wisdom is needed to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn “all great and important undertakings.”

The importance of the first two pillars seems obvious. In order to create something valuable, intelligence – wisdom – is needed. And if something of value is to endure, it must be strong. There is no doubt that this symbolism was first called to the attention of our stonemason ancestors by the very nature of the building craft. In order to erect a building, a plan is necessary – the intelligence, the wisdom, to bring together the disparate parts in a harmonious whole. And, for such a building to endure, it must also have strength. It must have a strong foundation, strong walls that are true and upright, and a means of keeping the whole building together. This requires the use of geometry, which

is both one of the seven liberal arts and sciences and the “foundation upon which the superstructure of Freemasonry is erected.”

But why beauty? Creating a structure that is attractive may be desirable to an architect, but is it necessary that buildings are beautiful? Why would our stonemason ancestors have added beauty to the trilogy by which they defined “all great and important undertakings.”

To answer this question we need to turn to the history of architecture itself. The great aim in antiquity for the construction of any building,

especially a building composed of stone, was how to make the structure endure for years into the future. In early days, the creation of temporary structures – tents and huts – did not pose this problem. But in the creation of a “permanent” building it was a matter that required attention. Stonemasons’ earliest answer to the dilemma of endurance was to use the balanced weight of the construction materials to ensure a building’s permanence. Columns of stone were topped with lintels of stone laid

MASONIC WISDOM OFFERS BEAUTY TO ADORN “ALL GREAT AND IMPORTANT UNDERTAKINGS”

By John L. Cooper III, Past Grand Master

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



WISDOM

STRENGTH

BEAUTY

across these pillars at frequent intervals. The result was a strong building, but a very dark one, with little interior space. And while the buildings thus created may have had their own “beauty” of a sort, it was chiefly that of external adornment; the columns and lintels were painted in various colors that created a striking – if not exactly beautiful – structure.

at Rome is one example from antiquity, as is the dome of St. Sophia’s in Istanbul, Turkey – the ancient city of Constantinople. The dome of the latter seems to float over the space it encloses, with a lightness and airiness that belies its great weight.

But it was the development of Gothic architecture that really created the beauty of interior space in

stonemasons who had the skill and ability to construct these magnificent creations of “frozen poetry.” And the light that these buildings enclosed became their most significant feature. Unlike the massive buildings of antiquity that had dark interiors (even those with the architectural genius of the Pantheon and St. Sophia’s), the buildings the freestone masons constructed were flooded with light. It may well be that this interior light was what our stonemason ancestors referred to as “beauty.”

In speculative Masonry we speak of “light” as the subject of active pursuit by a Freemason. Masonic light is often thought of as knowledge – the search for truth. However, I would suggest that it is something more than that. Just as our stonemason ancestors were fascinated with the interplay of light streaming through the vast windows of Gothic cathedrals, speculative Masons today are also intrigued with the splendor of light, which is the goal of our Masonic quest. There is some important symbolism here. As light is made up of all colors of the rainbow, so is Masonic light made up of “all sorts and conditions of men.” Race, creed, or other conditions are all blended together into one harmonious whole – the light of Freemasonry’s brotherhood. When we are seeking “further light in Masonry,” it is not necessarily more knowledge that we are seeking. What we are searching for is that glorious light of brotherhood, which a society of “friends and brothers” shines upon all our activities. Masonic light is truly the beauty that we are seeking – and it is a beauty that each of us has committed to create within our lives. ✧

***Masonic light is truly
the beauty that we are
seeking – and it is a
beauty that each of us
has committed to create
within our lives.***

The next step was to create more inner space, so that the structure could accommodate more people. The arch was invented, followed by a collection of arches that created the dome. When properly constructed, a dome not only allowed for great interior space, but it could also add a luminescence to the building. The Pantheon

a stone structure. Through the use of columns, arches, and flying buttresses, the interiors of Gothic cathedrals were flooded with light, reflecting the beauty of the stonework from which the building was made.

There is every reason to believe that “Freemason” is a shortened form of “Freestone Mason,” referring to the

Beyond the Drawing Board

THE CREATIVE FORCE BEHIND THE MASONIC HOMES' NEW MEMORY PROGRAM

By Laura Benys

Joseph Pritchard and his Compass Club team know a thing or two about innovation. When Pritchard, the Masonic Homes' director of memory care, took on his position last fall, he and his team tackled the task of developing a specialized program for residents with early memory loss. From scratch.

"Have you ever drawn a face before?" Pritchard asks. "At the very start, you draw just an oval and a cross in the middle. That's what we had. We still had to draw the features, the shading, all the details of the skin. It was daunting." They went to the drawing board, and began.

OUTSIDE THE LINES

The outline for Pritchard's task was envisioned in 2014, at the Masonic Homes Board Retreat, when Past Grand Master David R. Doan spearheaded a discussion on the need for a more robust approach to memory care. "I had seen many people in my life – lodge brothers, family, and friends – affected by memory loss," says Doan. "It is tragic

to see an otherwise healthy person losing their precious memories at a time in their lives when they should be enjoying their experiences and life. We now know that in many cases we can slow and even prevent the onset of memory loss through mental exercises and physical activities."

Understanding that demand for memory care was increasing both on the Masonic Homes campuses and in society at large, the Board began discussing the need for caring for residents with early-onset dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and for developing new methodologies aimed at slowing dementia. Rather than just adapting existing technologies to suit the Masonic Homes' needs, the Board's vision was for the Masonic Homes – and the fraternity – to become a leader in pioneering new approaches to memory care. One important step would be the Compass Club.

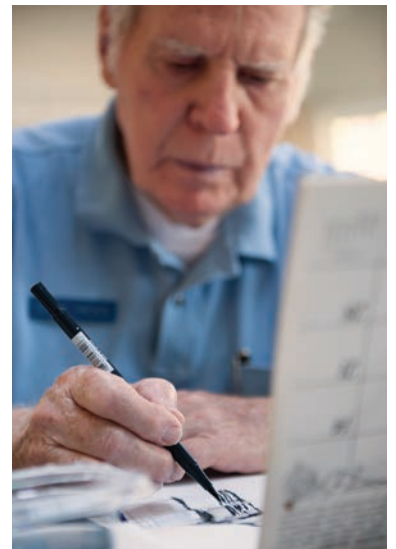
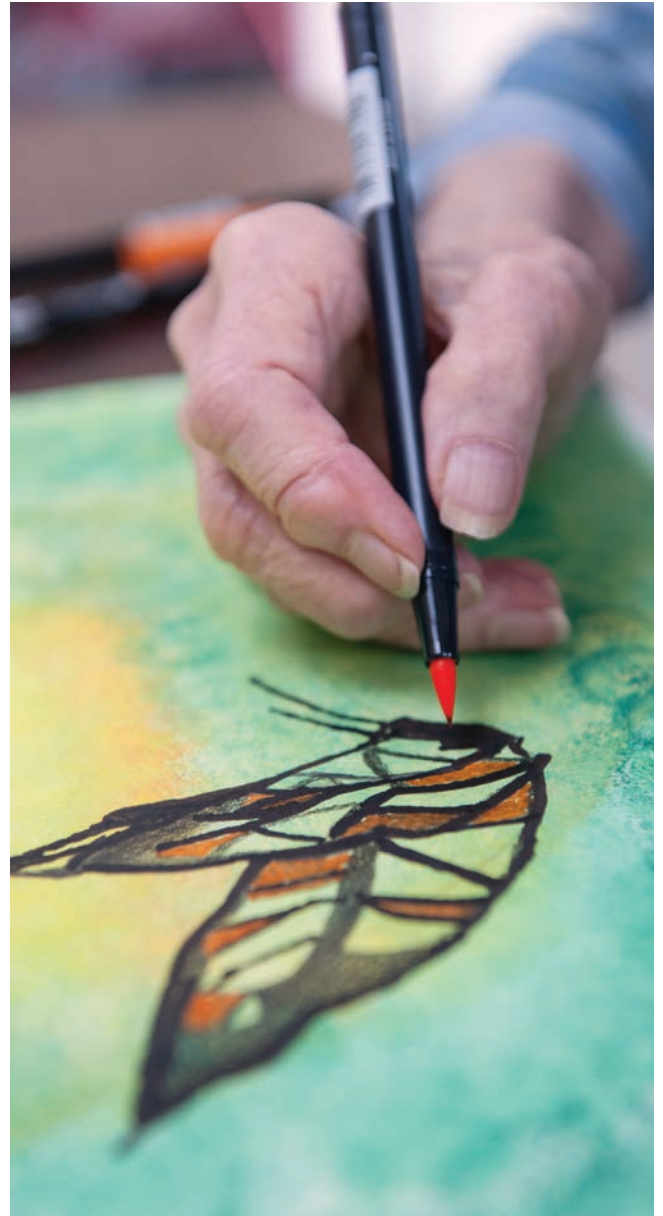
Led by Pritchard, the Compass Club's handful of devoted staffers tapped into their experience and imagination to come up with a better approach to memory care. The new program was inspired by 15 or so residents at the Union City Home. They were physically independent, but no longer thriving due to increasing memory loss. They struggled with isolation and depression. What they needed was special care, and a program that would reintegrate them into their community.

By and large, the senior care industry's response to this early level of memory loss is nothing at all. At a more advanced stage of memory loss, most care facilities turn to a traditional day program, anchored in one designated space. Yet Compass Club staff realized that this traditional model would result in more separation from the campus community. They decided to take advantage of a variety of campus spaces that intuitively lent themselves to therapeutic activities: the gym and art room; the ice cream parlor, museum, and garden. Other spaces were designated for music appreciation and reminiscing. The team broke out the 15-resident group into smaller groups to accommodate each space and provide more individual attention.

With no template to reference, Compass Club staff trained in and adapted best practices from traditional, well-respected memory care programs like Memories in the Making and Music and Memories. They talked to experts in the field and culled research from academic journals, including the Journal of Neuroscience and the Journal of Positive Psychology.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

THROUGH THE MASONIC
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RESIDENTS EXPERIENCING
EARLY MEMORY LOSS HAVE
NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO BE
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They talked to Compass Club residents' spouses, neighbors, and close staff members, to learn what residents enjoyed, currently and before they started developing memory issues. They customized activities based on the answers, tapping into the social, physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and nutritional domains of memory support.

The result is a "mobile day program," which frames residents' days with group activities throughout campus. Guided by staff called "navigators," residents participate in music appreciation and art classes, meals, and exercise routines. The program especially focuses on opportunities for social engagement. Already, Pritchard can see a difference. Residents who had been reclusive now look forward to art and music programs. Those who had been depressed and declining in health have suddenly stabilized or improved. They're out and about on the Home's stimulating grounds, and naturally feel more engaged in the community.

"These residents became used to going outside their apartments, seeing their friends again, and walking around the campus, so when they came to a campus-wide event, they were more at home. They didn't feel ostracized or stigmatized because of their memory challenges," says Pritchard. "It was a big change."

BREAKTHROUGHS AND BRIDGES

Soon, the Compass Club team will introduce a new program to its repertoire, called Opening Minds Through Art. It is designed to build bridges across age and cognitive barriers through art. Once again, creativity is playing a central role in the program; this time, it's the residents who'll be tapping into it.

"Creativity and innovation are essential for memory health and care," says Pritchard. There is a growing body of

research demonstrating that creative expression improves physical and psychological well-being. A 21-year study recently released by the New England Journal of Medicine found that frequent dancing reduced dementia in participants by 76 percent. Whether dance or painting, the key is this: Challenging the brain and body to learn something new, rather than retracing familiar routines.

“When you play Solitaire for the first time, it’s challenging. But after a few weeks you’re no longer stretching your mind. Thinking of new ways to engage the mind is vital,” says Pritchard. “That’s why, when we developed this program, it needed to be able to evolve with the residents.”

In an art program, rather than having residents draw an object in front of them, Compass Club staff will ask them to draw something from memory: a scene from their childhood, or a portrait of a loved one. The team learns residents’ musical taste and experiences, and finds ways to engage them in a new way: Music from their generation performed with different instrumentation, or a modern version of an old classic. It’s pleasantly familiar – and more importantly for memory, it’s stimulating.

“Creativity has to be balanced by purposefulness,” Pritchard says. And so, as a final touch of ingenuity, the team has combined elements from various national and gold-standard tests to measure cognitive abilities, depression, anxiety, and other factors. By looking at the results together, they get a sense of residents’ overall quality of life, and the effectiveness of their new program.

“We know that being enrolled in the Compass Club program is improving their quality of life,” Pritchard says. “That’s what we want to be able to say to their loved ones. If we can keep that promise, then we’ve done our job.” ❖

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As a television and movie producer, Barry Berg is responsible for this effect. He has produced and managed films, commercials, and television shows all over the world, from the cult-classic movie "Clueless" to the History Channel's acclaimed "Hatfields & McCoys" miniseries to the hit horror comedy series "Scream Queens." With each project, he oversees a crew of creative talent, harnessing everyone's abilities to create a cohesive final piece. It is demanding work with grueling hours, requiring a special kind of devotion. Berg has plenty.

"As a kid I used to stay up all hours of the night watching old movies. I'd cut school and go to the art houses to watch the films – French, English, anything I could get into," he says. "I've never lost that childlike fascination."

Berg grew up in Chicago. He never really knew his father, who passed away when Berg was 13 years old. But he'd heard something once about him being a Mason, and as an adult, decided to investigate. In 2004, it led him to Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge No. 307. Now a 10-year Master Mason, Berg sees a familiar shine of show business in the ritual, elevated by the bonds of brotherhood.

"It's a remarkable thing when you realize that these guys are doing the ritual for you and for others, unselfishly, to advance the craft," he says. "It's inspiring."

A longtime donor to the Annual Fund, Berg is also inspired by the fraternity's philanthropic work.

"Charity is part and parcel of why you become a Mason," he says. "The fraternity gives you an opportunity to help others. It gives you an opportunity to be noble. I'm grateful to Masonry for putting me in a position to be able to do that." ♦

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