

DECEMBER / JANUARY 2013



FREEMASON.ORG

CALIFORNIA

FREEMASON

a
KEEN *eye,*

a BRIGHT
heart

MASONIC JOURNALISTS EMBRACE

the craft, bringing fresh

PERSPECTIVE TO THEIR WORK

"*being*
BALANCED
makes me a
better WRITER, *both*
PRODUCTIVE &
HEALTHY."

alex SIMON

Publication Board

John F. Lowe, Grand Master
Allan L. Casalou, Grand Secretary and
Editor-in-Chief

Editorial Staff

Terry Mendez, Managing Editor
Angel Alvarez-Mapp, Creative Editor
Megan Brown, Senior Editor
Sarah Gilbert, Assistant Creative Editor
Michelle Simone, Assistant Editor

Photography

Cover and feature:

Carlos Blanco: © Paolo Vescia Photography
Alex Simon: © Resolusean Photography
Joseph Blackstock: © Zachary Winnick
p. 3, 25-26: © Resolusean Photography
p. 5, 7, 27: © Emily Payne Photography

Illustration

Cover and feature, p. 8, 16-17
© Chen Design Associates

Design

Chen Design Associates

Officers of the Grand Lodge

Grand Master - John F. Lowe,
Irvine Valley No. 671
Deputy Grand Master - John L. Cooper III,
Culver City-Foshay No. 467
Senior Grand Warden - Russell E.
Charvonia, Channel Islands No. 214
Junior Grand Warden - M. David Perry, Napa
Valley Lodge No. 93
Grand Treasurer - A. Raymond Schmalz, Mill
Valley Lodge No. 356
Grand Secretary - Allan L. Casalou,
Acalanes Fellowship No. 480
Grand Lecturer - Jack M. Rose,
San Dimas No. 428

freemason.org

CALIFORNIA FREEMASON ISSUE 2
December/January 2013

USPS # 083-940 is published bimonthly by Masons
of California, 1111 California Street, San Francisco, CA
94108-2284. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Francisco,
CA and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to California
Freemason, 1111 California Street, San Francisco, CA
94108-2284.

Publication Dates - Publication dates are the first
day of October, December, February, April, June,
and August.

Subscriptions - CALIFORNIA FREEMASON is
mailed to every member of this Masonic jurisdiction
without additional charge. Others are invited to
subscribe for \$2.00 a year or \$2.75 outside of the
United States.

Permission to reprint - Permission to reprint original
articles in CALIFORNIA FREEMASON is granted to
all recognized Masonic publications with credit to
the author and this publication.

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



CALIFORNIA
FREEMASON

CONTENTS

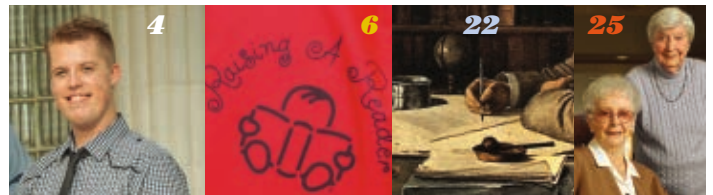
VOLUME 61 /// NUMBER 2 /// DECEMBER/JANUARY 2013



10 FEATURE

A Keen Eye, a Bright Heart

Journalists are known for their deep curiosity of the human condition. So it should be no surprise that Masons are attracted to this field, viewing their discoveries from the perspective of the craft.



2 EXECUTIVE MESSAGE
3 MEMBER PROFILE

8 MASONIC EDUCATION
19 HISTORY

4

LODGE SPOTLIGHT

One Mason rallies his lodge and community to support public schools and promote child literacy: one book at a time.

6

IN CALIFORNIA

We use 20 regions of our brain when we learn to read. So in addition to fostering a love of books, Raising A Reader strengthens children's minds.

22

IN CALIFORNIA

Robert Burns, Rudyard Kipling, and Sir Walter Scott are three of the world's greatest literary legends. In this story, we examine their relationship with the brotherhood and its impact on their prolific bodies of work.

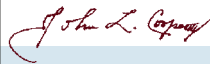
25

MASONIC ASSISTANCE

Forget crossword puzzles. Residents at California's Masonic communities flex their mental muscles with campus newsletters.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

John L. Cooper III, Deputy Grand Master



Excellence of Style and Expression

Collins English Dictionary defines literature as “written material such as poetry, novels, essays, etc., especially works of imagination characterized by excellence of style and expression and by themes of general or enduring interest.” In this issue of California Freemason, you will learn about authors who were Freemasons, and whose works of literature are a part of the heritage of humanity. It occurs to me, however, that there is a Masonic meaning in this definition of literature.

In the Entered Apprentice degree we first learn the meaning of the Rough and Perfect Ashlar in these words:

“By the Rough Ashlar we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessing of God.”

As a Mason works his Rough Ashlar throughout his life, his work might be said to be “characterized by excellence of style and expression,” in the words of the definition of literature. The expectation is that he will make something useful of his Rough Ashlar – not just chip away at it without thought or plan. He is to *imagine* what his Perfect Ashlar might one day become, and expects it to display that “excellence of style” which is the expression of his life’s work.

The writing of great literature is much like the working of the Rough Ashlar into the Perfect Ashlar. Most of us write daily – emails, text messages, and even letters now and again. Some of us write longer works – perhaps articles intended for

publication, such as you will see in every issue of this magazine. And a few are authors of books, such as Brother John Heisner, our grand orator last year, who is a well-known and published Masonic scholar. Except for brief messages, such as emails or text messages, writing requires thought and effort if it is to clearly communicate an idea. And works of great imagination not only communicate an idea, but often move us to action.

In a sense, all of this is true for every Mason. His life’s work is transforming the Rough Ashlar into a Perfect Ashlar. In doing so he follows the plan laid down in the “Great Book of Nature and Revelation.” And he does this, if he is truly dedicated to the teachings of Freemasonry, with excellence, imagination, and style. In fact, being a Mason might fairly be called an exercise in excellence of style and expression, just as is the case with great literature. At the end of his journey, what he leaves behind him can be every much as valuable as the world’s greatest literary works, for if he has truly used the implements of Masonry to work his Rough Ashlar into the Perfect Ashlar, he will be remembered long after.

Past Grand Master Benjamin Franklin wrote his own epitaph long before his death in 1790. What he said may well apply to all Freemasons:

*The Body of
B. Franklin,
Printer;
Like the Cover of an old Book,
Its Contents worn out,
And stript of its Lettering and Gilding,
Lies here, Food for the Worms.
Yet the Work shall not be lost:
For it will, as he believ’d, appear once more,
In a new & more beautiful Edition,
Corrected and Amended
By the Author. ✧*

FACES OF MASONRY

MEET GERALD PETIEVICH: BEST-SELLING NOVELIST AND FORMER GOVERNMENT AGENT, MASON SINCE 2005

by Michelle Simone

A U.S. Secret Service agent waits, in Paris, for his contact. He is posing as a foreign banker to make a deal with an American renegade, who's selling counterfeit treasury bonds overseas. But when the contact strides into the room, the agent is shocked: This villain isn't a stranger. He is a lawyer the agent met years before in Los Angeles. And as he rises to meet his contact, the agent, Bro. Gerald Petievich, acknowledges that the situation's coincidental truth seems stranger than fiction.

"Sometimes real cases are so incredible that if I fictionalized them, they'd be unbelievable," says Petievich, a past master of San Marino Lodge No. 408.

Petievich can easily be described as an expert on believability in fiction. The author of several best-selling crime novels – three of which have been produced as major motion pictures – as well as film and television screenplays, Petievich is keenly aware of the nuanced relationship between fact, fiction, and a good story.

A veteran Army counterintelligence special agent and U.S. Secret Service agent, Petievich's life contains many gripping tales. He worked counterfeit money cases in Africa – Liberia, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone. He was in Russia with Nixon in the 1970s.

But it was in Paris that he found his calling to become a writer. "I felt like I had already done it all," Petievich says. "I was ready to write about it."

Petievich's own story traces to his youth in DeMolay and growing up as the son of a Mason. During an influential period, Masonic principles served as his "guidepost."

"There's no question that the Masonic principles I learned stayed with me – as a young man and certainly now," he says.



"When you're in an unusual world, working undercover with criminals, informants, double agents, and other strange people who are not following a straight and narrow path, it really helps to have a strong-principled background."

And, according to Petievich, the Masonic principles he strives to embody in his own life translate easily to the heroes he creates.

"In crime novels, there's a certain basic personality the hero must have," he says. "But, through everything I've studied in literature, I've determined that there's nothing closer to the ideal of the literary hero than a Mason. Masons stand by what's right. They are taught to choose the right path over the easy path." ♦

ONCE UPON A TIME

ONE LODGE RALLIES BEHIND A MEMBER WITH A VISION FOR THE BENEFIT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by Michelle Simone

The tale unfolds

Shawn McCarty, 27, is a fifth-generation Mason from Lodi Lodge No. 256. And while Masonry is one family legacy, teaching is another. Eight members of the McCarty family are teachers in Lodi. So as you might expect, education has long been a favorite topic around the McCarty dinner table.

“Our number one wish has been for kids to have more access to exciting material on their own,” McCarty, an elementary school teacher, explains. “Teachers must follow a certain curriculum, but required books aren’t necessarily appealing to all students. And it’s the books students want to read that really drive their interest in reading.”

Limited funding is the biggest hurdle. Instructors who want to provide students with books to read outside the classroom, simply can’t afford to.

Our heroes embark

McCarty first imagined the solution when he was in college: A book drive that would culminate on March 2, the birthday of renowned children’s author Dr. Seuss and Read Across America’s annual child literacy celebration. He tried to rally his Greek

fraternity around the idea, but there wasn’t enough interest and eventually he gave up.

It was always in the back of his mind though, and in December 2011, the idea resurfaced. This time, he had the perfect partners in mind: his lodge.

When McCarty suggested the drive at Lodi’s January stated meeting, the lodge was enthusiastic.

“I thought it was a fantastic idea,” says Master Lloyd Roper. “It fit in nicely with the grand master’s plan for promoting public education.”

Past Master John Herrick agrees. “We’ve partnered with local schools in the past, but the projects all end. Since Shawn’s a teacher, he’s plugged into the system; this project can be continued each year.”

Within a few weeks, McCarty distributed the first flyers, bought tubs to house donations, and sent letters to involve parents. The 32-day ‘Read Now’ campaign started at the beginning of February.

“We wanted to get as many books into classrooms as possible,” McCarty explains. “If children begin reading at the primary level, once they’re in secondary school, they’re prepared.”

Meeting the challenge

As the lodge spread the word to both local and Masonic communities, one of their strongest supporters was the Stockton Scottish Rite.

“They hung signs and hosted a tub in their temple,” McCarty says. “They also put an ad in their Trestleboard and donated cash.”

All three Masonic youth orders rallied around the initiative as well. DeMolay dads donated and collected books; Rainbow Girls decorated tubs; and Job’s Daughters dedicated a meeting to the drive, filling a whole tub on their own.

But perhaps the most vital partnership McCarty forged was a commercial one – with Tom’s Used Bookstore.

McCarty approached the store with a proposal: Could Tom’s provide store credit for donated books that were unsuitable for



JOHN HERRICK, LLOYD ROPER, AND SHAWN MCCARTY POSE WITH ONE OF THE BOOK COLLECTION BINS THAT LODGE NO. 256 PLACED THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.

elementary classrooms? Tom's agreed, enabling the lodge to accept all kinds of books.

Prior to distribution, each book was hand-stamped with the Masonic square and compass logo, as well as the lodge's name and mailing address. "Anyone who picks up a book can see the good that we're doing," McCarty says. "And someday these kids may remember that sign and look into Masonry."

A fairy tale ending

The drive was an overwhelming success, yielding more than 1,300 books - nearly triple the lodge's goal.

"When Shawn said how many books he'd collected, we were flabbergasted," Herrick says.

On March 2, members delivered their donation to Vinewood Elementary School - McCarty's alma mater, where his aunt currently teaches and the school library is named after another lodge member's wife.

Teachers and students alike were thrilled. In some classrooms, donated books were so popular that teachers created library-like systems to encourage sharing. Letters from thankful students and parents poured in.

Championing the "Great Equalizer"

Nestled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Illinoistown-Clay Lodge No. 51 in Colfax has been supporting literacy at the local level for more than 15 years.

Each year during Public Schools Month, the lodge raises funds for the libraries at Colfax High School and nearby Dutch Flat Elementary School. The lodge, which has about 100 members, has given more than \$14,000 over the past decade alone. And its efforts have not gone unnoticed.

In her letter to the editor of a local paper, Colfax High School Librarian Joan Parker praises the lodge for their "generous annual gift." She also explains the donation's significance.

"Even with expanding technological advancements, such as eBooks, MP3 downloads, iPads, etc., the library is still the go-to place for pleasure reading and information," Parker writes. "It is still the place where students who may not have access to these technological gadgets can check out a book - still the 'great equalizer.'"

Master Douglas Nickell describes it like this: "The baseball team has a budget and a booster club to help with their uniforms and supplies, but there aren't too many 'library boosters' - and the library serves all the kids. Libraries need our help. That's why we set this up."

The lodge's 2013 goal is 2,000 books. To reach it, McCarty plans to partner even more closely with the community: He is working with the district to identify the lowest-performing school in Lodi to benefit from the drive, and will attend PTA meetings to involve parents. Classrooms will be rewarded for collecting books.

McCarty says, "If we can get one kid that one special book that gets him going - whatever that takes, it's worth it." ♦

BRAIN POWER: FUELED BY BOOKS

THE SCIENCE BEHIND RAISING A READER'S ACCLAIMED LITERACY PROGRAM

by Laura Normand

In an elementary school classroom, a few dozen parents stand in a circle. “Singing?” one says hopefully, and lobs a ball of red yarn to a man who, after a beat, tosses it to a young woman opposite him. “Telling a story,” he says in a thick accent. “Telling a story,” the woman repeats, and sends it right back.

The tangle of red represents the growing web of neurons in the brains of their children. Parents learn that with every language-based activity, from playing “I spy” to reading, their children’s webs become larger and more complex; when these actions are repeated and reinforced, neural pathways for language are strengthened.

Even at school, family comes first

In 1999, a group of venture philanthropists from Silicon Valley decided to take a hard look at the problems plaguing public schools. They asked why some students struggled but never caught up, and why schools couldn’t seem to help these students close the knowledge gap.

As they sought to trace every failure back to its cause, the philanthropists learned that the first domino actually toppled earlier than they’d imagined: When entering school, many children weren’t prepared to learn how to read.

The next question was the real nut of the problem: Why?

The answer emerged where some least expected it – not in schools, but in children’s homes. While schools played a vital role, family engagement topped all other influences in early childhood and academic achievement.

To help solve this problem and begin closing the knowledge gap, the philanthropists developed a new type of literacy program, based on engaging families. Their program, Raising A Reader, makes books a favorite toy; engages parents in reading those books; and trains teachers and librarians to support the family’s efforts. A legacy of literacy then follows.

Brain storms

Some 20 regions of the brain are activated when we learn to read. Compare two MRI brain images: one, of a typically developing child in a Western country; the other, of a Romanian orphan who grew up in a deprived environment. There are thunderstorms of activity in the first child’s brain. In the brain of the Romanian orphan, the same areas are dark. Because no one has been talking or reading, singing or playing with her, her brain’s language centers are not developing. By the time she reaches age five, this is even more troublesome.

“Neuro pathways in the first year of life and first five years of life are incredibly malleable. After that, the door doesn’t slam entirely shut, but they’re much more difficult to build,” explains Holly Kreider, Ed. D., a long-time researcher of education and child development, and a former senior director of programs for Raising A Reader. “Interactions like eye contact, turn-taking, exposure to lots of words, repetitions of words – all of these create pathways. And pathways that have been reinforced stick.”

What does this have to do with reading?

“We get to literacy through language. You have to have a rich home language environment; you master oral language skills

and then you become literate,” Kreider says. “It’s like you’re building a house. You lay the foundation and get the wiring in before you bring in the furniture.”

Imagine, then, the difference between a child whose parents spend time reading and talking to him every day, and one who only looks at books in school, or not at all. The latter is not only going to be uncomfortable learning how to read – he may lack the neural pathways he needs to get started.

In millions of homes throughout California, especially among families of lower socio-economic status, shared reading is not a habit. Some parents do not have the financial resources to buy books. Some do not feel confident reading aloud, or never learned to read themselves. Others assume that reading is best left to the school. This is why Raising A Reader was founded.

An instruction manual for families

“Giving someone a book is a little bit like giving her an exercise machine,” says Raising A Reader’s executive director, Gabrielle Miller. “It only works if she uses it.”

The program not only rotates nearly 100 books through every home, but works directly with parents, teachers, and librarians to create a culture of reading. In special trainings, parents are shown brain images and participate in the yarn exercise. They learn different techniques for sharing books.

Today, Raising A Reader is one of the largest and most successful literacy programs in the nation. It’s already served more than 800,000 children. The Masons of California partnered with the program in 2011, and with the fraternity’s support, it will reach thousands more California families.

Over the past 10 years, some 20 independent studies – measuring everything from conventional literacy outcomes to



how often parents take their child to the library – prove that the program works. Thanks to California Masons, Raising A Reader was introduced to San Francisco’s Jose Ortega Elementary School last year. By the end of the year, reading scores had jumped an astounding 10 points on California’s Academic Performance Index (API). In a San Jose kindergarten classroom, students who’d been through the program were able to independently read 100 words. The standard is 30 words.

“The parents were so hungry for books that the principal had to open the library on Saturdays,” Miller says, with audible glee. “That’s exactly the kind of program the Masons are funding and the kind of change they are inspiring.” ♦

THE POWER OF THE PEN

GOTTHOLD LESSING AND MASONIC TOLERANCE

by John L. Cooper III, Deputy Grand Master

The saying “The pen is mightier than the sword” was coined by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in a play he wrote in 1839. But the phrase, had it been invented earlier, might have been the defining characteristic of a Freemason in 18th century Germany who changed the course of German Masonic history. His name was Gotthold Lessing, and this is his story.

Born at Kamenz, Germany, on January 22, 1729, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was almost a contemporary of Bro. George Washington, who was born in 1732. As with our own first president, Freemasonry changed the life of Lessing, and through him Freemasonry in his own country.

Freemasonry as we know it dates from 1717 when the first grand lodge was formed in London, England. In 1723 the new Grand Lodge at London adopted a regulation declaring that Freemasonry was to be open to all men regardless of their religious affiliation, with the only requirement being a belief in a Supreme Being. In the 1720s Freemasonry had its first Jewish members, and tolerance toward all religions became a defining landmark in Freemasonry. But as Freemasonry spread to the continent this principle of toleration did not follow with it,



and in Germany in the 18th century Freemasonry was restricted to members of the Christian religion.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing enrolled at the University of Leipzig in 1746, and began a journey of personal enlightenment that eventually led him to become a Freemason on October 14, 1770, at Hamburg. It was a logical step for a man whose life by that time had become a passion for learning. The only problem was that his best friend, Moses Mendelssohn, was Jewish and therefore could not become a Mason with him. Out of this personal struggle Lessing created one of the great works of Masonic literature, and caused German Freemasonry to open its doors to men of all faiths.

The work which Lessing wrote is called “Ernst and Falk,” and it is cast in the literary form of a dialogue between two friends. The format is familiar, because Plato used it in writing his dialogues some two thousand years earlier. As with the Socratic dialogues of Plato, Lessing was able to bring the reader into the picture by having him listen in on what purports to be a private conversation.

In Lessing’s dialogue, Falk is a new Mason, and he is talking with his friend about Freemasonry. His friend asks him why he became a Mason, and Falk – like many new Masons – doesn’t have a very good answer. Ernst asks Falk if he is a Mason, and Falk says, “I think I am.” This vague answer sparks a conversation on how a Mason would know that he is a Mason – in other words, is being a Mason something more than just being a member of a Masonic lodge? Today we would probably phrase the question, “Is being a Mason something more than just having a dues card indicating that you have paid your dues to a Masonic lodge?” At the end of the conversation, Falk has a much clearer understanding of what it means to be a Mason – an understanding that is probably expressed best in a play which Lessing later wrote to expand upon the need to truly understand what Freemasonry should mean to a Mason. In his play, “Nathan the Wise,” this description of Freemasonry sums up Lessing’s understanding of the impact it should have on every Mason:

*Therefore, let each one imitate this love;
So, free from prejudice, let each one aim
To emulate his Brethren in the strife
To prove the virtues of his several ring,
By offices of kindness and of love,
And trust in God. And if, in years to come,
The virtues of the ring shall reappear
Amongst your children’s children, then, once more
Come to this judgment-seat. A greater far
Than I shall sit upon it, and decide.
So spake the modest judge.*

The play was about three brothers whose father gave each one a gold ring – only one of which was the “true” gold ring. The trick was to find out which was the true ring, and the three brothers went before a famous judge to see if he could tell them. He said that the wearer of the true ring would be loved by everyone, while those who wore the false rings would not. You can guess what happened. Each of the brothers lived his life so that he would be the most loved, and as a result the “one true ring” had actually become three “true rings.” Freemasonry, according to Lessing, does that. It transforms each of us by causing us to practice kindness and love.

Lessing did not live to see German Freemasonry become open to men of all religious faiths, for he died in 1781. But his influence eventually won out, and by the 19th century Freemasons who were Jewish sat down in lodge beside their brethren who were Christian, in a new understanding of the true meaning of brotherhood. ✧



WEB EXTRA

John Cooper writes about Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – another famous German writer and Freemason – and explains the Masonic theme of “Faust” at freemason.org.

a KEEN eye,



BY

heather boerner

a BRIGHT heart

MASONIC JOURNALISTS EMBRACE
the craft, bringing fresh

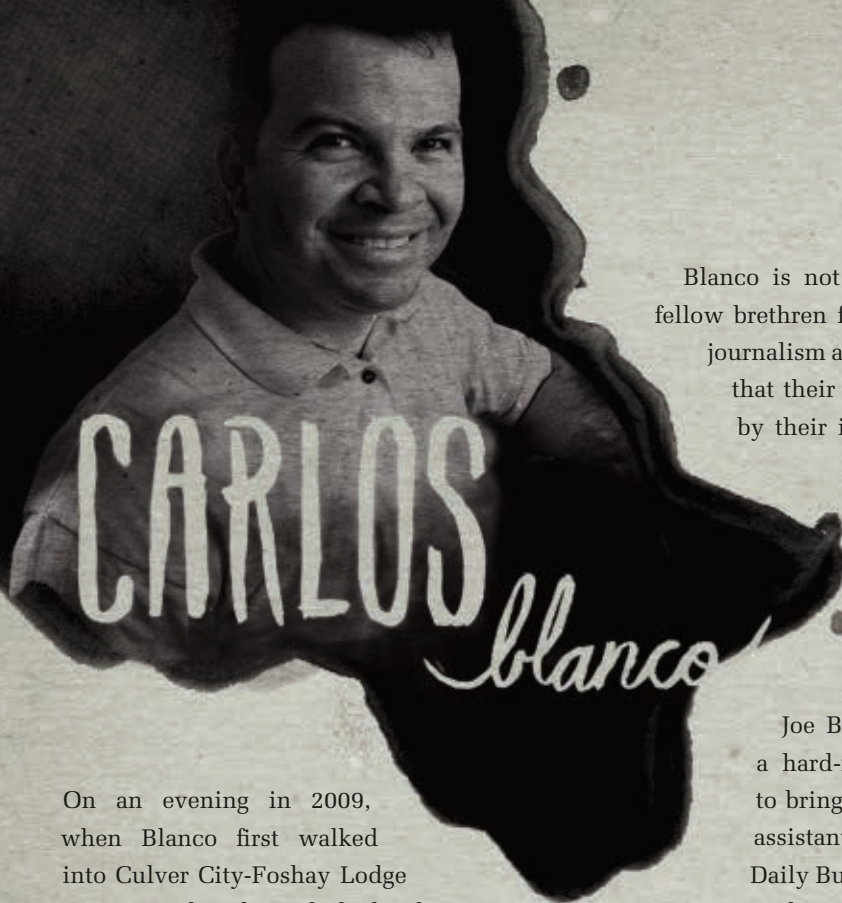
PERSPECTIVE TO THEIR WORK

Carlos A. Blanco's earliest defining moment came at the age of 5, when he composed his first poem, a love note to a little dark-haired girl in his native Costa Rica. Then there was his move, at 21, to Silicon Valley to study engineering, and the afternoon at the Mountain View Public Library a year later, when the pull of words overwhelmed his interest in the mathematical equations spread before him. That was the moment when he realized he was actually a writer with a "weird hobby" in science.

A few years later, he learned from a Santa Barbara priest that Pope Benedict XVI liked to carry an iPod to listen to Mozart. The sense of discovering something human about the larger-than-life Pope captured his imagination. He wanted to

know more, and he wanted to write about it. This was the moment he knew he was a journalist – with all the curiosity and appetite for learning that goes along with it.

Continued next page



On an evening in 2009, when Blanco first walked into Culver City-Foshay Lodge No. 467 and spoke with the brothers there, something new slid into place.

"In becoming a Mason, the way information delved into the esoteric and metaphysical [made me realize that] I had to stop and rewrite my life somehow," says Blanco. "I wanted to start a new page in my career. I wanted to erase everything and rewrite journalism."

And so Blanco, with the mind of a scientist, heart of a dreamer, eye of a journalist, and soul of a Mason, launched his version of a "new journalism," one in keeping with Masonic teachings and his desire to discover stories yet untold.

"What I love about journalism is that you become an expert in life and you get paid for it," he says. "But Masonry opened me up to a more philosophical way of looking at life, of building on it."

Blanco is not alone in this sentiment. Some of his fellow brethren from throughout the state, also practice journalism and the craft in unique ways. But all agree that their professional lives have been influenced by their interpretation of what it means to be a Master Mason.

THE WHOLE STORY, from the beginning

Joe Blackstock, 64, doesn't consider himself a hard-news guy. He doesn't especially want to bring down corruption – though his work as assistant city editor at Ontario's Inland Valley Daily Bulletin sometimes calls for public records searches, attending city council meetings, and covering court cases. What he cares about are people.

"Some people get into journalism to save the world," says Blackstock, who joined Alhambra Lodge No. 322 at 21. "I think for me, it has a lot to do with liking people and wanting to know about them."

It's a curiosity that started young. Blackstock "learned to read by reading newspapers," he says. When he was 16, he joined his high school newspaper. By his senior year, he was its editor. And as soon as he landed at East Los Angeles College, he joined the newspaper staff. Soon, he was working at a local weekly paper, writing articles and taking photos.

Even after he transferred to California State University, Los Angeles, he spent every minute outside of class at the small weekly.

"Journalism's not just a nine to five job," he says, "especially since it's rarely an eight-hour day."

Indeed, Blackstock's 50-hour workweeks mean that he finds fun where he can, often in his regular history column.

John Steinbeck and the Calling of Masonry

"I try not to write history; I try to tell stories," he says. "I try to tell people about interesting things that happened in the past that relate to things happening today."

For instance, one of Blackstock's recent columns focused on the expansion of mass transit in Southern California. Before reviewing the present initiatives, Blackstock reminded readers that before there was a light rail or Metrolink, there were the Red Cars – famed Pacific Electric trolleys that connected Los Angeles, Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.

"A lot of people had no idea that what we have today is about a tenth of what we had 100 years ago," he says.

But Blackstock may not have accomplished any of his work without Masonry. Years before he stepped foot in his first newspaper room, he walked into a lodge for his first meeting of DeMolay International, a Masonic organization for young men. It was there, Blackstock says, that he learned Robert's Rules of Order – guidelines that come in handy during public meetings. And it was his devotion to the Masonic youth orders that encouraged him to become a Mason: He initially joined so he could be a DeMolay advisor. Since then, he has also served as an advisor for Job's Daughters in the Inland Empire.

Blackstock credits the Masonic lessons he learned as a DeMolay for some of his essential skills as a journalist.

"I got a lot of confidence from DeMolay to go out into the world and become a journalist. It gave me the opportunity to experience all kinds of people the average person doesn't deal with, to learn to ask questions, and to talk to elected officials," he says. "My overall Masonic experience is how I learned to do that."

REFOCUSING the lens

Alex Simon, 45, worked at his high school newspaper, too. But he's the first to tell you journalism wasn't his passion. No, that belonged to a dark room, a big screen, and a man in a bowler hat with a mustache.

To look around Salinas Lodge No. 204, you wouldn't know that John Steinbeck's prints are all over it – or at least his family's are. The Steinbecks literally built parts of lodges in San Juan Bautista, Monterey, and, yes, Salinas.

Steinbeck, a member of the lodge from 1929 to 1933, is one of the best known literary novelists of the 20th century. A longtime journalist, Steinbeck's realistic depictions of American life – including such masterworks as "The Grapes of Wrath" – earned him international recognition and both the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes for literature.

And while Steinbeck did not remain involved with the craft throughout his life, Master Mason Bryan Whaley believes that Masonry never left the author.

"When Steinbeck died, he still had his demit card and his lodge card with him," says Whaley. "Why would he keep them if he didn't care about Masonry? In all his books, he wrote about Masons: The main character or the father was always a Mason."

Whaley believes that Steinbeck, who demitted the year he moved to New York and his book "The Red Pony" was published, did so with the intention of rejoining a lodge there. For reasons Whaley can only guess at, he did not.

The years Steinbeck spent in lodge marked the beginning of his serious literary career. His father was a Master Mason, and gave his son free lodging, supplies, and loans so he could dedicate himself to writing on a full-time basis.

Steinbeck's philosophy about writing, as represented in his Nobel acceptance speech, seems to reflect a Masonic perspective: "The writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit – for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion, and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, these are the bright rally flags of hope and of emulation."

"When I was five, my father took me to see Charlie Chaplin's City Lights," remembers Simon, who was raised in Elysian Lodge No. 418 in 2011. "Ever since then, I've been a film fanatic."

Continued next page

Simon worked on his high school newspaper – the better to beef up his college transcript and meet girls – and joined the campus newspaper staff in college. But he describes himself as the “weird kid walking around with a Super 8 camera.” He wrote television and radio scripts, acting them out with friends in his Arizona hometown. They were usually cop or spy dramas – think James Bond with 8-year-olds and gallons of fake blood. By 11, he was enrolled in an adult-level screenwriting class.

After film school at the University of Southern California, Simon worked for a few years with B-movie legend Roger Corman, and had a few films produced on Showtime. One of his earliest screenwriting

credits was on “My Brother’s War,” which won the top prize at the first Hollywood Film Festival.

Yet when he went through a fallow period with his screenwriting, it should be no surprise that Simon returned to journalism – this time with a decidedly film-geek twist. He got a job at Venice Magazine, and within two years was named editor. In the following 13 years, he interviewed everyone from “Manchurian Candidate” director John Frankenheimer to writer James Ellroy to actors like Annette Bening, Jeff Bridges, Shirley MacLaine, and Anthony Hopkins. Morgan Freeman invited him to the set of “Million Dollar Baby” to watch him work.

Those who speak with Simon quickly learn that he is unlike most celebrity interviewers: He cares only about the craft.

“I’ve never asked about their personal lives,” he says of his subjects. “If they volunteer it, I try to turn the conversation back to their work.”

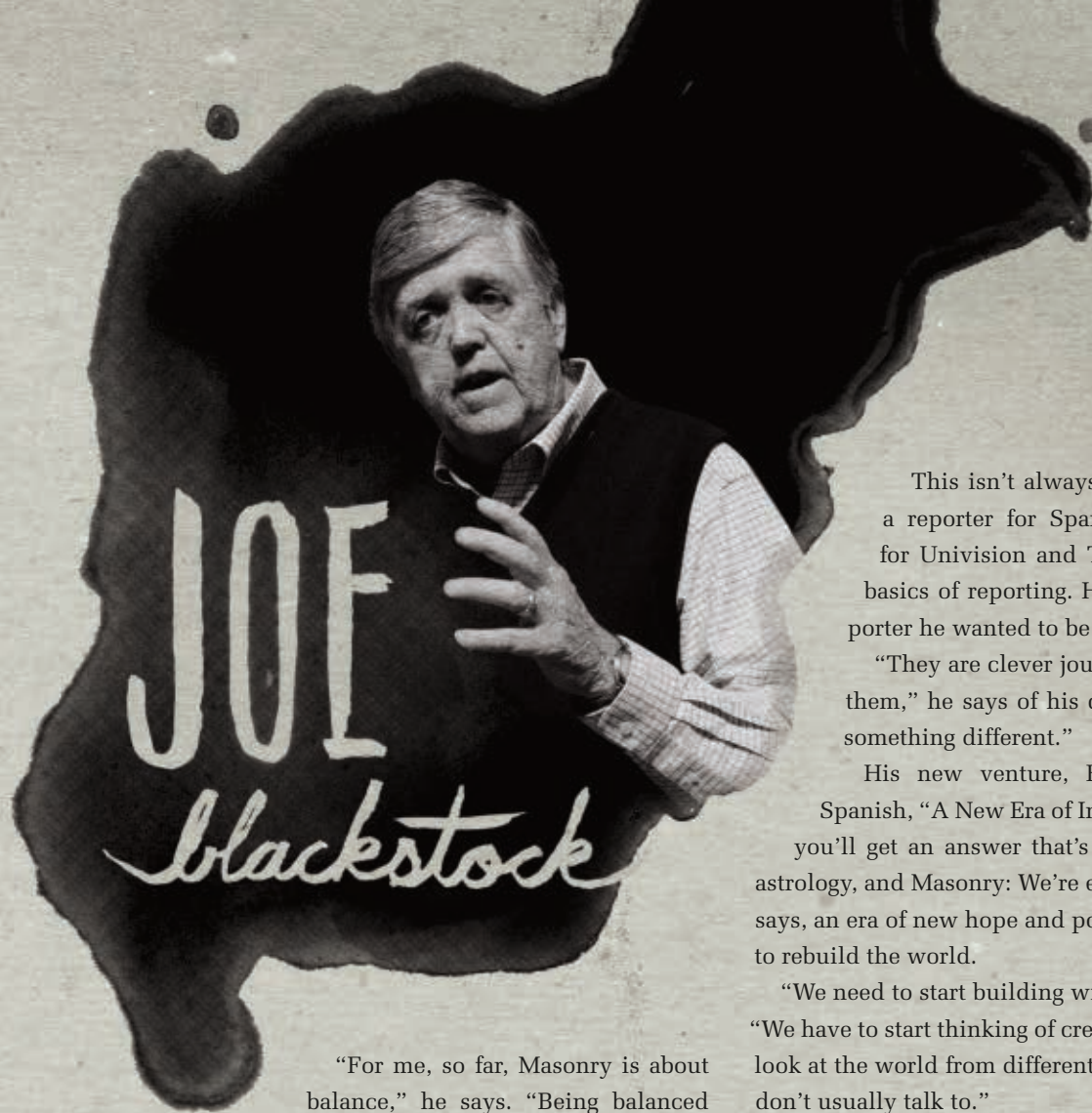
What Simon wants to know is how each person found success. What he’s learned is that success is as much about luck as talent, he says. Seeing the humanity in a multiple Oscar winner helps, too.

“Actors have bad skin and bad teeth and they may not even be that great to look at in person,” he says. “I see what a difficult road it’s been for everyone, including people who are universally revered. I learned if they can do that, I can do it.”

Although treating mega-successes like Anthony Hopkins “on the level” was something he did instinctually before becoming a Mason, Simon says the craft has deepened and changed his work.

He’s been writing scripts again, the most recent of which is a semifinalist in The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ Don and Gee Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting. But today, his ambition is tempered by Masonic moderation.

ALEX
simon



“For me, so far, Masonry is about balance,” he says. “Being balanced makes me a better writer, both productive and healthy. Oftentimes, it can be

easy to sacrifice yourself and your personal life in exchange for high achievement in your career. I’m not willing to do that anymore. When I went through the degrees, they taught me things I inherently knew – that I was born knowing – but that society had beaten out of me. Now I feel like I’m seeing those things again, and I realize, ‘Oh yeah. That’s right. I used to know that.’”

NEWS from a NEW VIEW

Unlike Blackstock or Simon, you won’t find Blanco in a newsroom or interviewing celebrities. Instead, look for him sitting on a sidewalk outside a bar in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district, seeing the world from a different perspective.

“My approach is, ‘Everyone has something to say, everyone gets an interview, everyone gets to give back,’” says Blanco.

This isn’t always how it was for Blanco, 37. As a reporter for Spanish-language news broadcasts for Univision and Telemundo, Blanco learned the basics of reporting. He also learned what kind of reporter he wanted to be – and what kind he didn’t.

“They are clever journalists and I learned a lot from them,” he says of his colleagues. “But I needed to do something different.”

His new venture, BlancoTV.com, is subtitled in Spanish, “A New Era of Information.” If you ask him why, you’ll get an answer that’s a combination of metaphysics, astrology, and Masonry: We’re entering the Age of Aquarius, he says, an era of new hope and possibilities – and an opportunity to rebuild the world.

“We need to start building with one stone at a time,” he says. “We have to start thinking of creative ways to report. We need to look at the world from different perspectives, talk to people we don’t usually talk to.”

Take, for example, that afternoon on the sidewalk in the Tenderloin.

“[A homeless man] told me that if I sat on the street, I would see the world in a different way,” he says. “He was right. I sat on the street and people looked at me as a beggar. Everything changes when you look from down upward.”

For Blanco, this desire for a new perspective entails more than professional drive. As with all his writing, journalism serves as a means to work through his own “dark side” – an inclination towards negativity, conflict, and division. His challenge is to constantly retrain that focus – to treat people square and on the level, to act from his best self, as Masonry urges him to do.

“That’s our responsibility as writers and journalists,” he says. After a pause he amends, “And human beings.” ♦

REINVENTING THE RESEARCH LODGE

AS MOTHER LODGES INTRODUCE MORE MASONIC EDUCATION, RESEARCH LODGES MUST REDEFINE THEIR PURPOSE

by *Laura Normand*

“At the end of the 19th century, we were the laughingstock of the academic world.”

When I ask John Cooper about the origins of Masonic research lodges, this is how he begins – bluntly. Cooper, California’s deputy grand master and past grand secretary, is a member and fellow of several research lodges across the country, as well as second vice president of the Philalethes Society, the largest and oldest Masonic research society in the U.S.

“The stuff that [Masons] produced was fantastical, under no standards of analysis,” he continues. “The last part of the 19th century was an important time for the study of history. There were some great, monumental writers.”

“But there we were,” he says, “wandering around in the swamp.”

Research revolution

In 1884, nine brothers founded Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 under the United Grand Lodge of England. Its mission, as recorded on its present-day website, was “to replace the imaginative writings of earlier authors on the history of Freemasonry.”

More research lodges soon sprang up around the world, attracting well-educated members, many of whom were professional scholars. Particularly in non-English-speaking countries, where research was (and is) a central part of a candidate’s degree requirements, these lodges followed rigorous scholarly standards, producing scores of research papers on the history of Masonry.

In the U.S., as the fraternity boomed and lodges rushed to keep up with degree conferrals, research lodges filled a different role. Most became a destination for those who simply wanted more education. If a member wanted an outlet to talk about and study Masonry, he joined the closest research lodge.

Today, research lodges still exist in every major grand lodge in the world. Some, like Quatuor Coronati Lodge, continue to produce papers of great scholarly merit. Others focus on topics of local interest, often presenting short talks to members and the public for education or entertainment.

Historically, California’s research lodges fell under this category, but these days, that’s not necessarily the case.

Challenged to change

In many ways, the future of California research lodges boils down to supply and demand. The demand is there: Members are still hungry for Masonic education. But supply is also skyrocketing. More than ever before, mother lodges are finding ways to implement Masonic education programs themselves. At lodges like Prometheus No. 851 in





San Francisco, hardly a meeting goes by without a paper or presentation. And research lodges are at a crossroads.

Jordan Yelinek is master of Prometheus Lodge and a past master of Northern California Research Lodge (NCRL). “Lodges are beginning to fill the void [in education] once filled by research lodges,” Yelinek says. “So research lodges have to ask ourselves, ‘How do we remain viable and necessary? How can we still contribute to the craft in some meaningful way?’”

Currently, California has five research lodges, each with a different answer. In Fullerton, Southern California Research Lodge has attracted a staggering 3,000 members from around the globe by focusing on user-friendly education and information. It produces a monthly review of instructive Masonic articles, sourced from publications worldwide, that’s ready-made for candidate education and stated meeting talks. Golden Compasses Research Lodge in Folsom – California’s newest research lodge – aims to create an online library of original research papers. And in San Francisco, NCRL has rebranded itself as a “Masonic grad school.”

NCRL leaders realized that many of their members, despite being dedicated students of Masonry, had little experience writing a research paper or speaking on a topic. Yelinek, a cell biologist, suggested a collaborative method he and fellow scientists had used during graduate school. The lodge now sets aside stated meeting time for each

Continued next page

What's in Your Personal Masonic Library?

RECOMMENDED READING FROM CALIFORNIA MASONIC LEADERS

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

- » *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*
- » *Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*
- » *One Hundred Years of Freemasonry in California*

MORE REFERENCES, BY AUTHOR

- » Beresniak, Daniel: "Symbols of Freemasonry"
- » Churton, Tobias: "Freemasonry – The Reality"
- » Cooper, Robert L.D.: "Cracking the Freemasons Code: The Truth About Solomon's Key and the Brotherhood"
- » Dyer, Colin: "Symbolism in Craft Masonry"
- » Harrison, David: "Genesis of Freemasonry"
- » Heisner, John: "Meditations on Masonic Symbolism"
- » Hodapp, Christopher: "Solomon's Builders"
- » Jacob, Margaret: "The Origins of Freemasonry, Facts and Fictions"
- » Jacob, Margaret: "Living the Enlightenment"
- » Jones, Bernard: "Freemasons' Guide and Compendium"
- » MacNulty, Kirk: "Freemasonry: Symbols, Secrets, Significance"
- » Morris, S. Brent: "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry"
- » Newton, Joseph Fort: "The Builders"
- » Piatigorsky, Alexander: "Who's Afraid of Freemasons?"
- » Pound, Roscoe: "Masonic Addresses and Writings"
- » Ridley, Jasper: "The Freemasons"
- » Stevenson, David: "The Origins of Freemasonry"
- » Tabbert, Mark: "American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities"

member to give a very short update on his current research project, followed by an in-depth presentation by one member. Everyone offers feedback.

"When members go back to their mother lodges to give talks, they've gathered information from as many sources as they can; they've refined their work," Yelinek says. "The first time we [used this collaborative method], the members interacted in a way I hadn't seen in my four years there. Guys sitting on the sideline were saying, 'I read this, what do you think of this?' Or, 'That reminds me of a talk I attended, have you thought about that?'"

The next 100 years

NCRL has also created the John L. Cooper III Fellowship. Named in honor of the deputy grand master, the fellowship is an annual titled lectureship from an honored scholar. This is already a popular model in other states; for example, the Texas Lodge of Research brings in world-renowned scholars for its Anson Jones Lectureship. For NCRL, the fellowship will further distinguish the lodge's work, giving it more visibility nationwide (the 2012 recipient was Bradley Kent Cooney, senior grand steward of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut).

Other research lodges must identify and begin carving their own niche, as well. "I'm hoping that in the future research lodges will continue to evolve," Cooper tells me.

"This generation of Masons is very interested in what Freemasonry is – what its teachings and philosophies are," he adds. "There's an eagerness and interest there. Research lodges need to respond to that changing environment." ✨

TALES FROM A MASONIC PEN

DISCOVERING THE FRATERNAL LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

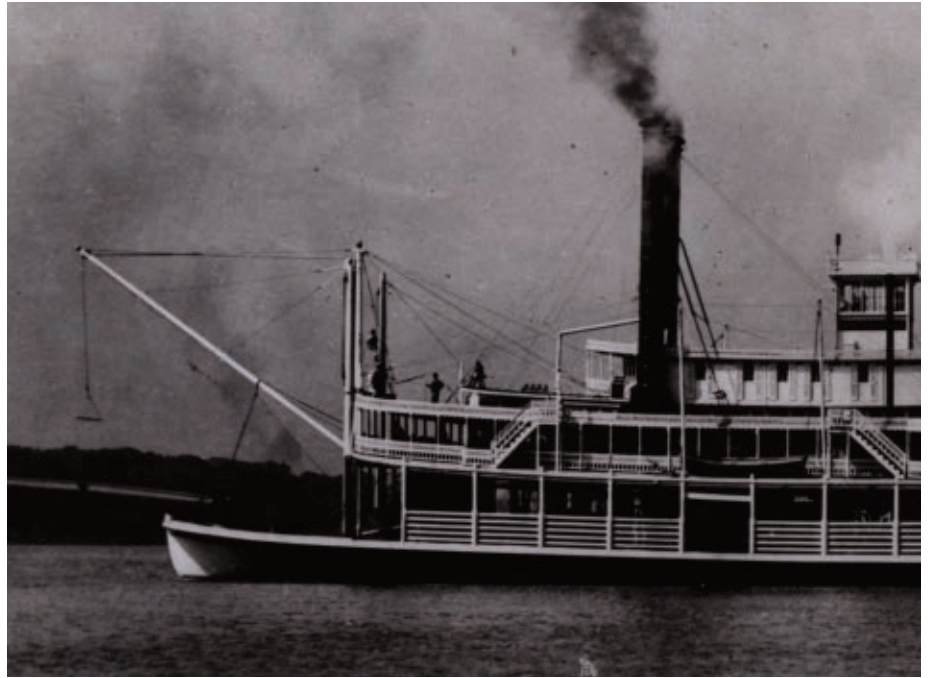
by Heather Boerner

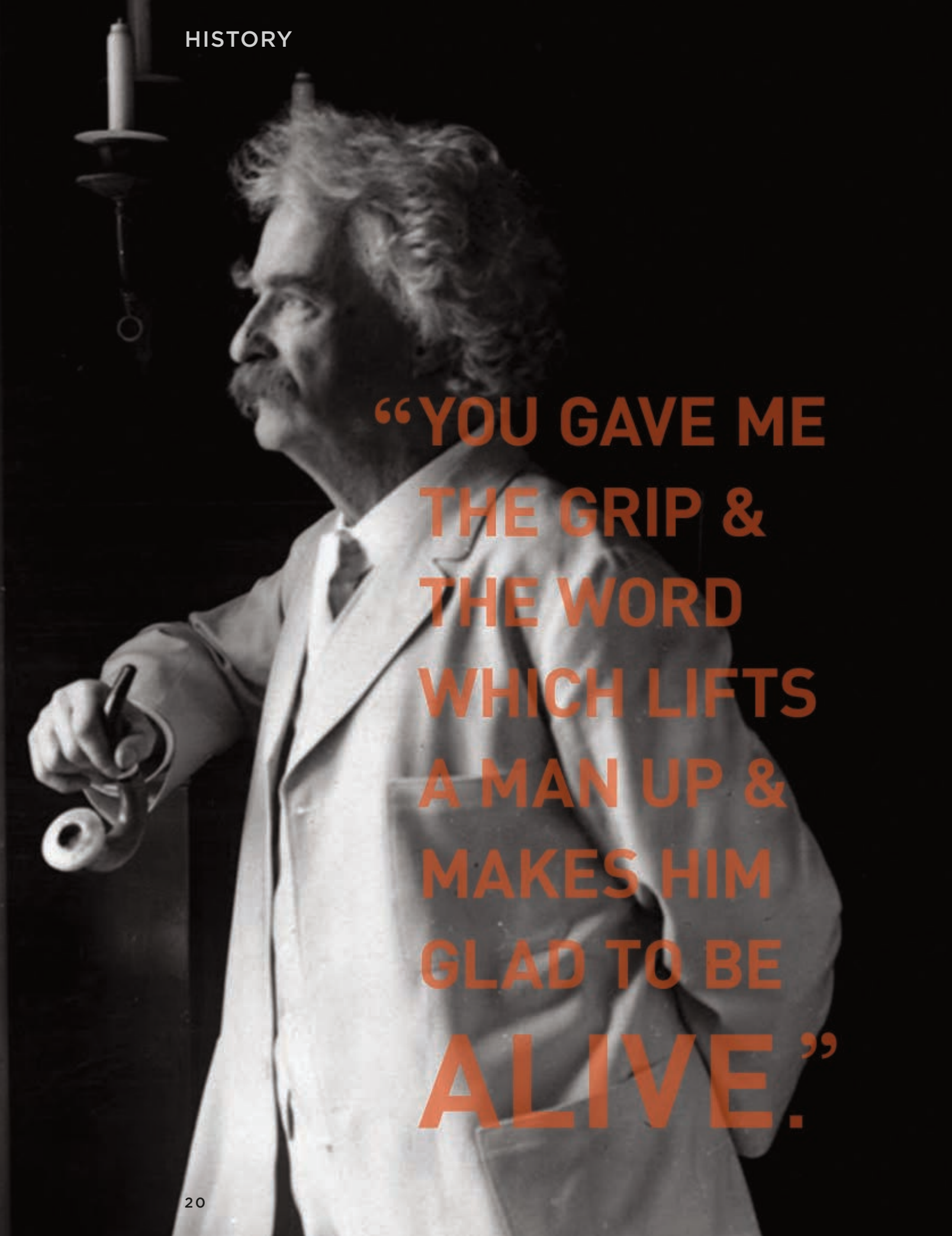
Mark Twain – born Samuel Langhorne Clemens – was the trickster storyteller of American letters, so it should be no surprise that he applied his particular brand of observation to the Masonry as well. Take, for instance, his description of a character in his 1897 “Tom Sawyer’s Conspiracy”:

“[H]e was Inside Sentinel of the Masons, and Outside Sentinel of the Odd Fellows, and a kind a head bung-starter or something of the Foes of the Flowing Bowl, and something or other to the Daughters of Rebecca, and something like it to the King’s Daughters, and Royal Grand Warden to the Knights of Morality, and Sublime Grand Marshal of the Good Templars, and there warn’t no fancy apron agoing but he had a sample, and no turnout but he was in the procession, with his banner or his sword, or toting a bible on a tray, and looking awful serious and responsible, and yet not getting a cent. A good man, he was, they don’t make no better.”

The idea of the 19th century man as a brother to many and a joiner of multiple fraternal organizations is not based on Twain’s own life. A Mason for a scant eight

Continued next page





**“YOU GAVE ME
THE GRIP &
THE WORD
WHICH LIFTS
A MAN UP &
MAKES HIM
GLAD TO BE
ALIVE.”**



WEB EXTRA

Each year since 2006, the Masonic Information Center has sponsored the Mark Twain Masonic Awareness Award. All regular lodges in North America are eligible for the award. Apply at msana.com/twainaward.

years – less, if you include a period in which his dues went unpaid – there is nonetheless evidence that the craft had an indelible influence on Twain.

Twain was born in 1835 in Missouri. The death of his father and his natural intellect sent him to work before his teens as a newspaper typesetter. Shortly thereafter, he was a columnist at his brother's newspaper where he later became assistant editor and, when his brother was out of town, boldly whipped up a feud with another local paper.

Twain found homes throughout the United States, from St. Louis to New York, Philadelphia, small-town Iowa, and New Orleans. He worked many years as a newspaperman and typesetter before taking up the unlikely vocation of river pilot. Eventually, he'd also work as a miner, serve briefly in the Confederate Army, tour the Hawaiian Islands, and live abroad.

By the time Twain became an Entered Apprentice at Polar Star Lodge No. 79 in St. Louis, he'd already published his first story, "The Dandy Frightening the Squatter." But just after he was raised to Master Mason in July 1861, he left Missouri and his lodge to join his brother in Nevada. Not long after, he continued his journalism career, working as the editor for a Nevada newspaper, as well as several others, sometimes under his own name and other times favoring pseudonyms. During his travels, Twain stopped paying his lodge dues and his Masonic membership was suspended.

But his association with Masonry was not at its end. In February 1865, Twain served as senior deacon at Bear Mountain Lodge No. 75 in California's Gold Country. Later that year, he published his first well-received short story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

Using the keen observation of a journalist and the humor of a fiction writer, Twain soon found himself writing travelogues of his trips to Europe and around the West for magazines in New York, some of which were turned into books. Lecture tours followed.

Unfortunately, as Twain's career blossomed, his participation in the fraternity waned. He demitted in 1869. But it appears that Masonry still remained on his mind.

In 1868, Twain traveled to Jerusalem and cut a branch from a cedar tree just outside the city walls. He had it made into a gavel, which he sent back to his lodge in St. Louis with this uncharacteristically serious note: "This mallet is a cedar, cut in the forest of Lebanon, whence Solomon obtained the timbers for the Temple."

The following decade, Twain's most famous works were published. "The Prince and The Pauper"; the "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer"; and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." By this time, he'd been long married, and had a family.

In his later years, however, Twain had a run of bad luck. Bad investments left him struggling financially. His publishing house went under. His wife, Livy, and daughters, Susy and Jean, passed away. Twain's mood, perhaps understandably, darkened – a change that was clearly reflected in his autobiographical writing.

And yet, in these moments of despair, Twain seemed to find solace in the concepts of Masonry. In 1900 – a decade before his death and many years after he demitted – Twain stood before the New York City Lotos Club, a club for writers of which Twain was a member, and spoke of the pain that had befallen him and the world.

"Seven years ago when I was old and worn and down, you gave me the grip and the word which lifts a man up and makes him glad to be alive," he told the group. "I come back from my exile fresh and young and alive, ready to begin anew." ♦

IN THEIR WORDS

FREEMASONS WHO MADE LITERARY HISTORY

by Tania Rohan

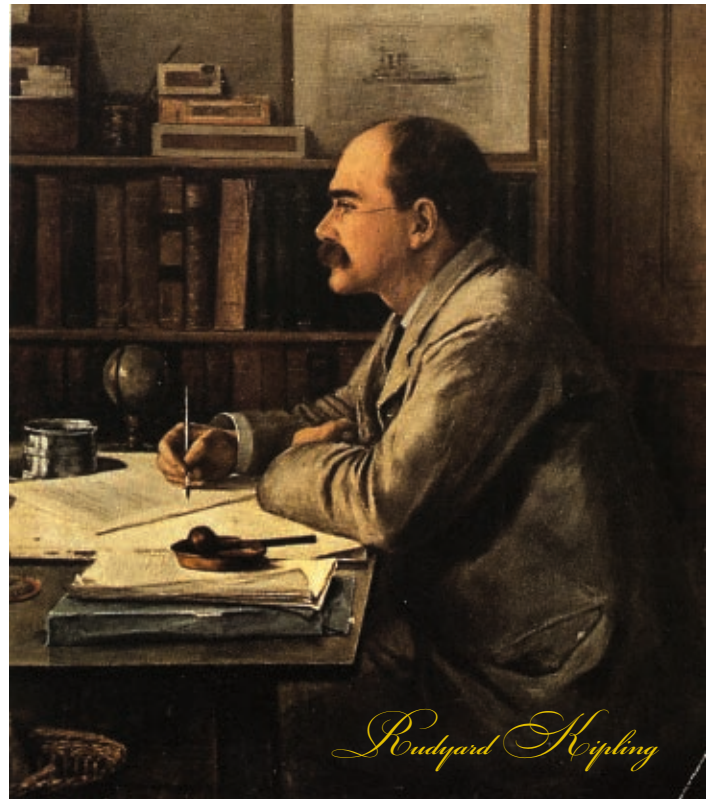
From scientists and soldiers to politicians and philanthropists, many of the world's most influential men have also been brothers of the mystic tie – and great authors are no exception. Here, we profile three Masons whose legendary works have captured the imaginations of so many readers both in and out of the brotherhood.

Spirit of brotherhood

Even those who aren't familiar with Robert Burns' poetry can probably hum along to his most famous work. "Auld Lang Syne," when set to the melody of a popular Scottish folk song, is probably the western world's most recognizable New Year's anthem.

Initiated into Tarbolton St. David's Lodge in 1781, Burns thrived in the brotherhood. Over his 15-year Masonic career, he held positions as depute master at his mother lodge and senior warden at St. Andrew's Lodge in Dumfries. He also regularly attended and received honorary membership at lodges throughout Scotland.

Of the three authors described here, Burns was the most active in the fraternity. That enthusiasm for the craft, and familiarity



with his brethren, is visible throughout his body of work, from light-hearted verses to heartfelt ballads.

In the poem "Death and Dr. Hornbook," Burns pokes fun at a fellow Mason who, in order to make ends meet, exaggerated his medical expertise. And when Burns decided to leave Edinburgh for Jamaica, he penned "The Farewell to the Brethren of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton," in which he bids his brothers goodbye:

*Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu;
Dear Brothers of the Mystic Tie!
Ye favoured, ye enlighten'd few,
Companions of my social joy!*

In this stanza, we see evidence of what many believe drew Burns to Freemasonry in the first place: its social aspect. Most – if not all – of his friends were members of the craft. He loved the companionship and festivity that characterized life as a Mason, and often depicted that spirit in his work.

The last stanza of the same poem forms the historical basis for the toasts raised at “Burns’ Suppers” at lodges around the world:

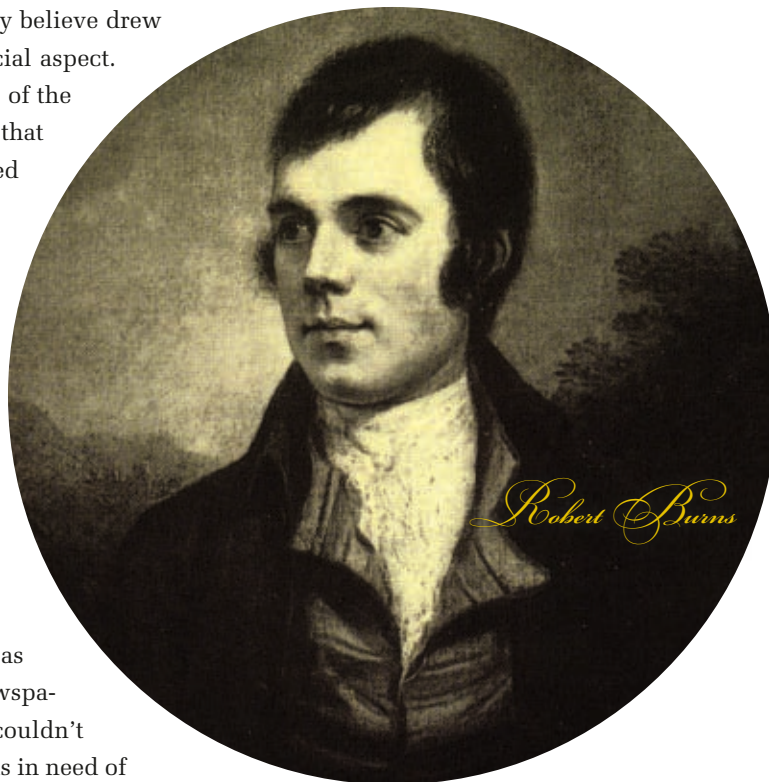
*A last request permit me here
When yearly ye assemble a’,
One round, I ask It with a tear,
To him, the Bard that’s far awa.*

Tales of adventure

In 1886, young Rudyard Kipling was working as an assistant editor at an English language newspaper in Punjab, India, when he got an offer he couldn’t refuse. The Lodge of Hope and Perseverance was in need of a secretary. Kipling’s father had been one of their members, and the lodge thought his son would make a suitable initiate. So at just 20 years old – a year younger than the minimum age requirement – Kipling became a Freemason and his lodge’s secretary.

He went on to become one of Britain’s most celebrated authors, earning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. His catalog of work includes such classics as “The Jungle Book” and “Just So Stories,” as well as the controversial poems “Recessional” and “The White Man’s Burden.”

Though Kipling was only active in the brotherhood for four years, he distinguished himself within the fraternity. He earned the Mark Master Degree in a Lahore Mark Lodge, and was made honorary member of numerous lodges around the world. He was also made poet laureate of Canongate Kilwinning Lodge No. 2 in Edinburgh, where Robert Burns held the same title nearly a century earlier.



Kipling’s fascination with the craft and its symbols is visible in multiple areas of his writing. He composed wholly Masonic poems, the most well known of which – “The Mother Lodge” – pays tribute to his brethren at the Lodge of Hope and Perseverance. In what is believed to be his masterpiece, the short story “The Man Who Would Be King,” he tells the story of two young Masons who seek out adventure in present-day Afghanistan. While on their journey, they encounter a native population who practice Masonic rituals and who are in possession of religious artifacts that depict Masonic symbols.

Continued next page

References to Masonry in Literature

MASONRY ON YOUR BOOKSHELF

Dan Brown's references to the craft in his high-profile novels "The Da Vinci Code" and "The Lost Symbol" have made Masonry notorious for contemporary readers. But fame isn't new to the fraternity. In fact, Freemasonry has been part of popular literature for centuries – in obvious references and in more subtle allusions. Have you ever spotted the Masonic references in these well-known works?

- » Herman Melville, "Typee" (1846)
- » Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846)
- » Charles Dickens, "Bleak House" (1852)
- » Wilkie Collins, "The Woman in White" (1860)
- » Leo Tolstoy, "War and Peace" (1869)
- » Arthur Conan Doyle, "Sherlock Holmes – A Study in Scarlet" (1887)
- » George Bernard Shaw, "An Unsocial Socialist" (1887)
- » William Babington Maxwell, "Hill Rise" (1908)
- » James Joyce, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" (1916)
- » Ernest Hemingway, "A Farewell to Arms" (1929)
- » John Steinbeck, "The Grapes of Wrath" (1939)
- » Don DeLillo, "Libra" (1988)
- » John Berendt, "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" (1994)
- » Neil Gaiman, "American Gods" (2001)

Where there's a will...

From overcoming a childhood bout of polio to literally writing his way out of debt, Sir Walter Scott was a man who persevered against the odds. His strength of character, humility and literary genius enamored him to many of his contemporaries. Born in 1771 in Edinburgh, Scott was the first Scottish author to achieve success on an international scale. Our modern-day perception of Robin Hood as a jovial, patriotic rebel is based on Scott's depiction of the character in his novel "Ivanhoe." Excerpts from other works of his have become proverbial. The expression, "Oh what a tangled web we weave," is a line from Scott's poem, "Marmion."

Scott hailed from a long line of Freemasons. Both his father and grandfather were Masons, as were members of his extended family. He himself became a Mason at the age of 30 in an emergency meeting at St. David's Lodge, where he received all three degrees on the same night.

Although the craft did not feature prominently in Scott's work, some of the characters he created were allegedly based on men he encountered in the fraternity. Dominie Sampson, from his novel "Guy Mannering," is said to be based on the Reverend George Thomson, master of Melrose St. John Lodge in 1822. The character of Captain Clutterbuck in "The Monastery," is supposedly based on Adam Ormiston, also a master of the same lodge. And there is evidence of some of the symbols held dear to the brotherhood in his works. In "Ivanhoe," for example, he describes the tournament field as an "oblong square."

When Scott's publishing company went bankrupt, he promised to pay back his creditors through writing and thus spent the last years of his life working feverishly. By the time he died, Scott had managed to reduce his debt considerably, and the continued popularity of his work eventually paid off the rest. ✨

HAVE YOU SEEN TODAY'S PAPER?

TWO NEWSLETTERS KEEP THEIR MASONIC COMMUNITIES HUMMING

by Laura Normand

Every morning, Opal Abernethy sits at her table with a cup of coffee, the Masonic Home at Covina's daily list of outings, and a pad of paper. She's checking upcoming events against the names of residents who have signed up to attend. And she's making lists.

"I study that newsletter every morning, and I have a big file of lists. I make lists of lists of lists," Abernethy says. At age 91, she's sharp as ever. She has to be.

Abernethy's morning ritual is part of her routine as assistant editor of the Home's monthly newsletter, *Over the Back Fence News*. We've all heard about the brain-flexing benefits of a daily crossword. For Abernethy, *Over the Back Fence News* is that, and more. As new outings are announced, she and resident editor Lois Gray compile a matrix of which events to report on and who should cover them, shuffling all the variables until the content plan clicks into place.

"It depends on where we go, what the assignment is, and who's capable of doing a good job on that particular type of outing," says Abernethy. "You have to know the people. It's a challenge."

Letters to the editors

Over the Back Fence News is in its 22nd year. The name, which was chosen by resident vote, reflects its editorial mission: to connect the community. Its collection of event coverage, quotes, poems, calendars, and articles keep residents in the

Continued next page



RESIDENTS LOIS GRAY AND OPAL ABERNETHY COMPARE NOTES FOR COVINA'S OVER THE BACK FENCE NEWS.

WEB EXTRA

Read the *Over the Back Fence News* and
The Messenger online at masonichome.org



loop. Residents report on selected activities. Staffers often contribute columns with a healthy aging focus.

As editor and assistant editor, Gray and Abernethy pull it all together. Abernethy is the point-person for resident writers, giving and collecting writing assignments. Gray, who is 88, organizes the finished material into final newsletter format, using professional software on her home computer, and

sends it to print. (An electronic version is also available at masonichome.org.)

All told, Gray estimates that she spends about 35 hours a month on the newsletter. She and Abernethy share proofreading responsibilities, and usually contribute writing, too. Neither had a real background in writing or editing before they got involved with *Over the Back Fence News* – Gray, in 2010; Abernethy, in 2004 – although Gray did edit a small newsletter for a Naval Air Station back in the 1950s. But in this case, editorial experience is less important than familiarity with the Home. Being plugged into the social scene is practically a job requirement.

“I do know what’s going on around campus,” Abernethy admits with a laugh. “I know the people, what they like and what they don’t. Some people only like to report on a musical. Others only want to report on a stage show or a movie if it’s a drama. Some will want to report if it’s a picnic or an outing.”

Of course, she also has the formidable task of collecting overdue assignments. “I always open the conversation with, ‘I’m beginning to nag you,’” Abernethy says. “They don’t mind it.”

Behind closed doors

When Rose Monroe, 92, walks the hallways and trails of the Masonic Home at Union City, she’s approached by residents who want to tell her their story. Every month, she shares one in “Behind Closed Doors,” her column in the community’s newsletter. The *Messenger* is a thick collection of articles, news updates, and calendars, edited and largely written by staff, and proofread by Monroe, fellow resident Carol Yowell, and



ABERNETHY AND GRAY DEVOTE 35 HOURS EACH WEEK TO COVER COVINA'S CAMPUS NEWS. STAYING ON TOP OF THE HOME'S SOCIAL SCENE IS A MUST.

front desk clerk Love Jhamat. Monroe carved out her niche in the newsletter shortly after moving to the Home in 2010.

“This place is filled with the most wonderful people in the whole wide world. They have wonderful stories, all of them. And I want people to see who they are,” she says. “That’s why I started ‘Behind Closed Doors.’”

An avid writer with a history in editing, journalism, and copywriting (in 1943 she was the first female employed by Swift & Company’s ad department), Monroe comes prepared. Armed with a tape recorder, she will usually meet residents in their apartments. Before they begin the interview, she’ll take a look around. “A lot depends on the feel I have when I walk into that room. I want to feel something when I get in there that tells me what it’s about,” she says.

By capturing individual stories, Monroe is also capturing a bit of history. Her columns depict Masonry and the Masonic Homes at a unique juncture.

She recently interviewed a husband and wife who came into the Home in 2009 at age 70 and 64, respectively. “They illustrate things about a whole new group of people here,” Monroe observes. “Things are changing all the time, and they’re in major change now. I’m hoping I can write it in a way so that I don’t come right out and say it, but people will be able to sense what I’m saying. I want them to see the changes.”

The lesson between the lines

The Masonic Homes and Acacia Creek espouse a philosophy of successful aging, which includes physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual wellness. Mental exercise is key. For resident contributors and readers, the newsletters are a real



ROSE MONROE'S BACKGROUND IN JOURNALISM AND COPYWRITING HELPS HER DELVE INTO THE HEART OF THE MASONIC HOME AT UNION CITY – ONE STORY AT A TIME.

workout. In Covina, Over the Back Fence News connects them to the bustling day-to-day of the campus. (The lively accounts of resident outings have even coaxed some hesitant participants to sign up for their first off-campus activities.) In Union City, besides sharing the stories in her column, Monroe has organized a group of “90-plus-ers.” The oldest independent member is 104 years of age; 59 more independent residents are in their 90s.

It’s a project that aligns with her personal philosophy as a writer: “You’re not writing for yourself,” she says. “The whole purpose is to connect.” ♦

Connecting with Masonic Assistance



MASONIC SENIOR OUTREACH

Masonic Senior Outreach, a program of the Masonic Homes of California, provides the senior members of our fraternal family access to the services and resources they need to stay healthy and safe in their homes or in retirement facilities in their home communities.

These services include:

- * Information and referrals to community-based senior providers throughout California
- * Ongoing care management at no cost
- * Financial support

Masonic Senior Outreach also provides interim financial and care support to those who are on the waiting list for the Masonic Homes of California. Contact us at 888/466-3642 or intake@mhuc.org.

MASONIC FAMILY OUTREACH

Masonic Family Outreach support services are available to California Masons and their families who need help dealing with today's complex issues, such as the impact of divorce, the stresses of a special needs child, job loss, and other significant life challenges.

Our case management services are broad, flexible, and able to serve families in their own communities throughout the state. If you are in need of support or know of a family in distress, contact us at 888/466-3642 or intake@mhuc.org.

MASONIC CENTER FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

The Masonic Center for Youth and Families provides integrated psychological services to youth ages 4 to 17 struggling with behavioral, academic, emotional, or social difficulties. To learn more about MCYAF, visit mcyaf.org or call 877/488-6293.

ACACIA CREEK

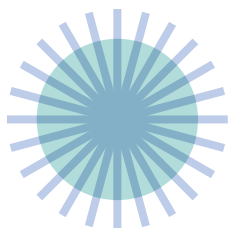
To learn more about Acacia Creek, our new senior living community in Union City, visit acaciacreek.org or call 877/902-7555.

STAY INFORMED

You may request a presentation be made at a lodge meeting about the Masonic Homes and Outreach programs by contacting Masonic Assistance at 888/466-3642 or intake@mhuc.org.

VISIT THE HOMES

Arrange a private or group tour to get a firsthand look at residential services on our two campuses. Be sure to call ahead (even if on the same day) so we can announce your arrival at the front security gate and make proper tour arrangements. Contact the Home at Union City at 510/471-3434 and the Home at Covina at 626/251-2232.



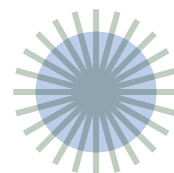
MASONIC ASSISTANCE

FRATERNAL CARE BASED ON MASONIC VALUES

We support and serve the whole family

- Masonic Homes of California
- Masonic Senior Outreach
- Masonic Family Outreach
- Masonic Center for Youth and Families

Call **888/466-3642** for information and support



MASONIC COMMUNICATION

.....○ FOR THE **DIGITAL AGE** ○.....

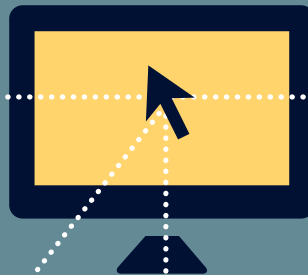


Fan. Member. Subscriber. Follower:
However you describe yourself in the digital world, we're here for you. How will you connect with the California Grand Lodge?



CALIFORNIA FREEMASON MAGAZINE APP

Available for the iPhone, iPad, Android devices, and Kindle Fire, the *California Freemason magazine app* lets you view current – and past – issues of the magazine on-the-go.



TWITTER

Follow *@masonsofcalif* to access live updates and more!

CALIFORNIA FREEMASON ONLINE

View past issues of California Freemason magazine – from 2002 to present day – online at *freemason.org > News and Events > California Freemason Online*. This digital edition of the magazine includes special “Web extra” content.

YOUTUBE

Subscribe to the *Masons of California YouTube* channel to view historic documentaries and more!

FACEBOOK

Are you a fan? “**Like**” the *Masons of California Facebook* page and the *California Masonic Assistance Facebook* page to stay up-to-date with fraternity news and connect with brethren throughout the Golden State – and the world.



2012-2013 GRAND LODGE OFFICERS



FIRST ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:

Jack M. Rose, Grand Lecturer
A. Raymond Schmalz, Grand Treasurer
Russell E. Charvonia, Senior Grand Warden
John F. Lowe, Grand Master
John L. Cooper III, Deputy Grand Master
M. David Perry, Junior Grand Warden
Allan L. Casalou, Grand Secretary

SECOND ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:

Arthur Porter, Assistant Grand Tiler
Ronald E. Schemm, Grand Pursuivant
Ronald E. Salda, Senior Grand Steward
Charles M. Jeronimo, AGL Division III
Bruce R. Galloway, AGL Division II
Roy R. Pool, AGL Division VII
G. Thomas Melugin, Senior Grand Deacon
Stephen R. Miller, Grand Organist
Tuoc K. Pham, Grand Bible Bearer
Douglas B. Eichen, AGL Division X
Cline C. Jack Jr., AGL Division VI
Gary G. Charland, Grand Standard Bearer
James E. Banta, Assistant Grand Secretary

THIRD ROW LEFT TO RIGHT:

Franklin R. Lee, AGL Division VIII
William J. O'Brien II, Grand Marshal
Welsey W. Daniels, AGL Division I
Jordan T. Yelinek, Grand Orator
Lynn R. Wallingford, AGL Division V
Ricky L. Lawler, AGL Division IV
Richard A. Fonseca, Junior Grand Steward
James A. Kurupas, AGL Division IX
Randall L. Brill, Grand Chaplain
Donald R. Taylor Sr., Grand Tiler
Christopher A. Putnam, Assistant Grand Organist
Marc A. Newman, Grand Sword Bearer