

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

St. James Lodge No. 47 F. & A.M.

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Stated Communications: 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Newsletter December 2009 – January 2010

FUTURE EVENTS

Year 2010 Schedule

- Jan. 7 St. John the Evangelist Program & Secretary's Annual Report (covered dish dinner, NOT open meeting)
Jan. 21 2010 budget, Treasurer's & Fin. Invest. Audit Report
Feb. 4 Charity budget; Grand Lodge Pre-filed Resolutions
Feb. 6-7 (Sat. - Sun.) Grand Lodge Annual Communication
Feb. 18 Grand Lodge Actions Report & Presidents' Day
Mar. 4 Guest Night (Open Meal 6:30 PM)
Mar. 18 Rededication & Re-obligation
Apr. 1 TBA
Apr. 15 Grand Master's Visit & H/I Awards (Open/Meal 6:30 PM)
May 6 By-Laws of St. James Lodge
May 20 Honor 60-Year Members
-----Begin Casual Summer Attire, Except for Degrees-----
Jun. 3 TBA Education
Jun. 17 St. John the Baptist Program & Flag Day
Jul. 1 TBA
Jul. 15 Reports by the Treasurer & Fin/Invest. Comm.; & 4th of July
Aug. 5 TBA
Aug. 19 TBA
-----END Casual Summer Attire-----
Sept. 2 Guest Night (Open/Meal 6:30 PM)
Sept. 16 TBA
Oct. 7 Past Masters', Widows & 25/50 Yr. (Open/Meal 6:30PM)
Oct. 21 Tyler's Annual Report
Nov. 4 St. John the Evangelist & Election of 2011 Officers
Nov. 18 TBA
Dec. 2 Installation of 2011 Officers (Open/Meal 6:30PM)

Sickness and Relief

Brethren, in his infinite wisdom the GAOTU saw fit to call our dear Lodge Brother, Thomas Peter Raggio, M.D. to the celestial Lodge on Monday, December 7, 2009. Bro. Tom was 88 years old. Let us keep his daughters and their families in our prayers. Brother Vasken Kaltakdjian's father died after a massive stroke. Keep Brother Vasken, his father and family in your prayers.

From the Handbook of the Masonic Law of the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana, BALLOTING AND VOTING

Every Lodge must have a regulation ballot box having two compartments. One compartment shall contain sufficient white balls, the minimum being twenty-four, and black cubes, the minimum being seven to permit all members present to vote. This compartment shall have an opening through which the voter's hand may be inserted and the ballot cast in secrecy through another opening into the second compartment, which must be a drawer or have a hinged cover to permit the ballot to be displayed to the proper officers at the right time.

Balloting must be held on only one candidate at a time and is always on the worthiness of the applicant.

Any Brother who exposes, or otherwise violates the secrecy of this ballot, shall be subject to Masonic discipline.

Although every member of the Lodge present at a meeting is required to vote on a candidate, the inadvertent failure to observe this requirement does not nullify the ballot.

A ballot shall be illegal and, therefore, null and void, and the members present shall be summoned and another ballot taken, if:

- A collective ballot is taken.
- A black cube is overlooked by the officers and their attention is called to it.
- A suspended brother is present at the meeting and voted.
- The ballot box is not properly prepared with the required number of white balls and black cubes.
- The ballot is improperly exposed.
- The members present are not fully informed as to the object thereof.

FROM THE EAST



I am humbled and honored to have been elected as this year's Worshipful Master of St. James Lodge.

Your help and guidance, my Brothers, during my journey to this office has made me a better brother in Masonry and a better person. Thank you.

I look forward to our continued fellowship and brotherly love as we all, along with our brothers where so ever they may be living, encounter the challenges of the New Year.

The St. James' degree team, under the able direction of our Brother and Senior Warden, Jimmy Robinson, started our Masonic year on December 12th, by raising three new Master Masons. Our congratulations and welcome to Brothers Ronnie Shane Marchand, Brad William McDaniel, and Joshua Aaron Senne.

Continuing our degree work into the new year, there will be a Entered Apprentice degree January 21th at 7:30, Thursday and Practice on January 4th at 5:00, Monday.

Every Brother's participation in each and every event of St. James Lodge makes the Masonic experience much more meaningful for all. My Brothers, YOU are important, please be here, with us.

On our January 7th meeting, St. James Lodge will have a covered dish dinner and a lecture on and in honor of St. James, the Evangelist.

Call Brother Joe Bardwell, our Junior Warden for any questions (955-7133).

Enjoy your Masonry! May the blessing of heaven be with all of us.

Timothy Atkins,
Worship Master 2010

Consider a PERPETUAL MEMBERSHIP at twenty (20) times current annual dues. This may be paid over 5 years.

Keep open meetings in mind-----Invite worthy guests.

It is NOT too early to start thinking about
inviting a guest: 6:00/6:30 P.M.
March 4, April 15, Sept 2, October 7 and Dec 2

RECENT EVENTS

Thursday, December 3, 6:00/6:30 P.M. - Stated Communication - Open/Dinner meeting for Installation of 2010 Officers. Two Investigation Committee Reports were received and Ballots held.

Monday, December 7, 5:30 P.M. - Practice.

Saturday, December 12, 8:00 A.M. - Breakfast; received two Fellow Craft Proficiency Examination Reports, and conferred three Master Mason Degrees.



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December 2009 -- January 2010

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The Black Cube that Gives Masonry a Black Eye

By Joe G. Cabuk, Jr., Grand Master of Louisiana Freemasons in 2003

Extracted, by permission, from a paper read to the Wednesday Masonic Study Group, October 10, 2001

The ballot box procedure of the Masonic fraternity in Louisiana uses a secret ballot in which brothers use white balls to elect or black cubes to reject a candidate who wishes to join a lodge. The presence of even one black cube causes rejection, regardless of the number of white balls. This power to "black ball" any man who has petitioned a lodge for membership is absolute, and the brother exercising this power need not reveal either the fact or the reason that he is the one who cast the black cube. Indeed, our Law Book prohibits every Mason from attempting to learn who cast the black cube or why it was done.

This system creates a potential problem, as it gives each Master Mason absolute power but does not balance that power by a corresponding level of responsibility. It has been said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." By giving the power of rejection without requiring the responsibility of publicly making the case for such rejection, we thereby set the stage whereon mischief can, and does, occur.

When a Mason casts a black cube for unjust, uninformed, or petty reasons, at least six bad things happen: First, a good man is denied Masonic light and fellowship in a lodge and his pride and sense of self-worth are surely hurt; Second, his wife and family will usually know he has been rejected and they will probably talk to their friends - they will surely not paint a nice picture of "the Masons" who rejected their loved-one; Third, the brothers who signed the petition are embarrassed; Fourth, the investigating committee is embarrassed; Fifth, the lodge is denied the chance to put on the degrees and to enjoy the fellowship of a good man; and Sixth, the Mason casting the improper black cube has committed a wrong against the petitioner, against his lodge, and against all his brother Masons, where-so-ever dispersed.

I suggest that the rejection of a good man is a wrong deed done, and the wrongly-cast black cube gives all of Freemasonry a black eye.

Before a ballot is taken, the Louisiana Masonic Monitor recommends that the Worshipful Master read the entire application of the candidate, including how the Investigating Committee voted. The WM should also say "Brethren, we are about to ballot on the worthiness of Mr. (full name) to receive the degrees in Masonry. The white balls elect, the black cubes reject. Be careful of your ballot and ballot for the good of the Order."

What is "for the good of the Order?" Let us consider the case of a man who has submitted a Petition for Initiation. Let's say the lodge has processed his petition in the usual manner and it is now time to ballot. Two Master Masons who should know something about this man have signed the petition and brought it into the lodge; the lodge members have discussed and received the petition; three Master Masons on the Investigating Committee have visited the petitioner in his home and found him worthy and also signed his petition; at least four weeks have elapsed since the petition was received; and lodges within 25 miles of the petitioner's home have been notified of the petition and no protest has been received. No brother in the lodge has made any unfavorable comment against the petitioner.

[Editors note: If any of these conditions fail to be met, NO ballot need nor should be made, as the results are already known.]

Now the ballot is taken, and there is one black cube. The ballot is taken again and there is still one black cube. Why might this be? Consider some reasons why a brother Master Mason might cast the black cube:

- Perhaps he is the petitioner's medical doctor and he is aware of the fact that the petitioner is secretly using illegal drugs, but professional ethics don't allow him to tell the lodge about it.
- Perhaps he is a law enforcement officer and he is aware that the petitioner is involved in a financial scam, which will soon be made public.
- Perhaps he is a psychologist and he is counseling the petitioner's family for child and spouse abuse by the petitioner.
- Perhaps he is a banker and he is aware that the petitioner has been passing hot checks.

While all the above items seem clearly to support a decision to cast a Black Cube ballot, now consider the following:

- Perhaps the petitioner is a police officer who gave one of the brothers a traffic ticket last week.
- Perhaps the petitioner is a loan officer in a bank which recently turned-down one of the brothers for a loan.
- Perhaps the petitioner is a lawyer and one of the brothers thinks there are too many lawyers in Masonry.
- Perhaps the petitioner is a car mechanic and one of the brothers thinks we don't need car mechanics with greasy fingernails in the fraternity.
- Perhaps the petitioner speaks poor English or is not well educated.
- Perhaps one brother knows the petitioner, and he just doesn't like him and doesn't want him in the lodge.
- Perhaps the petitioner attends a particular church and one brother doesn't like this church.

How do you feel about these reasons for casting a black cube? Where should the line be drawn? Each brother must decide which reasons are "right" and if any are "wrong."

We say that Masonry "Makes good men better." In the Address on Charity we tell new Master Masons that the cornerstone of our fraternity is Charity. We go on to explain that by Charity we mean the broader, grander, nobler Charity that regards all men as brothers. Note that we don't say "all Masons as brothers," but "all men as brothers." We explain to the new Master Mason that he is to practice the Charity that writes the faults of a brother on the shifting sands and his virtues on tables of enduring marble. If this is truly the case, does not a very strict standard apply to the Master Mason such that he must occasionally truly grit his teeth and, practicing that Masonic Charity which regards all men as brothers, vote "for" someone he doesn't like?

We can ask ourselves, what does the WM mean when he says, "we are about to ballot on the worthiness [of the candidate] to receive the degrees in Masonry"? What does he mean when he says "ballot for the good of the Order"? Does he mean the applicant must be "perfect", or only that he be a "good man"? Is anyone perfect? What is a "good man"?

Does not Masonry demand of me that I suppress my dislike for a particular person and accept him as a Masonic brother unless there is clear evidence that he will bring discredit upon the fraternity? If I don't learn to subdue my passions in this way, is being a Mason helping the good man in me become a better man? If I truly don't like someone and think that I will have personal problems with him being in my lodge, is it OK to remain silent and just ballot with the black cube, even though everyone else in the lodge casts a white ball? Does anyone benefit from such behavior?

Do we truly understand that when a Masonic lodge has rejected a petitioner who is well-known and well-liked in the community, the news of the rejection will get out into the community at large, despite our efforts at keeping it a secret? The writer is aware of "talk" among the non-Masons in his community about a "black-balling" which happened many years ago.

It is a fact that the rejection of one good man will deter other good men from ever applying for the light Masonry offers to the world.

Is there a black cube which gives Masonry a black eye? Each brother must decide for himself. If you decide that there is such a situation, what can be done about it? Perhaps the best we can do is to discuss this subject openly in the spirit of Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love, and most of all--Charity.

A few years ago, after casting a black cube, a dear Brother discovered he mistook the candidate for an unworthy person with similar name. Our courageous-but-mistaken Brother contacted our Master and confessed the error. The vote was nullified and our courageous brother went so far as to contact the victim of his error and apologize for his mistake. Nothing in Masonic Law prohibits anyone from admitting to making an error. If I were ever to make such a mistake, I pray that I will have the courage to contact the Master of the lodge. -bz-