

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

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

Monthly news letter for July 2005 – August 2005



FROM THE EAST

Invite Guests for our upcoming open meetings and meals. PLEASE! If they say they can't make one meeting, invite them to another.

REMAINING OPEN MEETINGS, this year:

September 1st, October 6th, November 17th and December 15th

While searching the internet I came upon an interesting article showing of how New Jersey masons are striving to increase the membership of their lodge by lifting the veil of secrecy.

<http://www.geocities.com/njmasonic/news.html>.

[quote]

Lifting the veil of secrecy

By JOSH BERNSTEIN

Freemasonry has been a puzzle to many for centuries.

On the one hand, its temples often are among a city's most beautiful structures. The organization's philanthropy is obvious through its Shriners hospitals, Masonic retirement homes and student scholarships.

In New Jersey, the Masons are lifting the veil of secrecy, if just a little.

On March 19, the New Jersey Masons will hold one-day classes at five lodges statewide, including at the Burlington Township headquarters off Oxmead Road.

The Masons have promoted the classes with newspaper advertisements and trailers in movie theaters.

The one-day class will reveal the meaning of some of the symbols such as the square and compass, the apron-like vestment worn by members and the letter "G" surrounded by the rays of the sun....

Memorization is not required in the one-day class. A mentor helps the candidate along....

Candidates cannot simply show up at a lodge March 19 and expect admission. They must submit an application by Jan. 31 and pay a \$250 initiation fee. Then a three-member Masonic committee interviews the candidate and his wife at home.

Masons can be of any religion. The belief in a "supreme being" is the only requirement.

"We take great men of great moral character and make them better," said DeStefano, a Mason for seven years. "That's what our motto is."

Wilson said he hopes to increase membership statewide by 5 percent, or 1,600 men. He said Pennsylvania and Ohio had similar percentage increases during one-day classes....

Source: Burlington County Times

January 9, 2005 6:31 AM

[unquote]

Perhaps it would be well for Louisiana masons to take heed of what other states are doing so we may find a method appropriate to our state.

Ken Streater, W.M.

RECENT EVENTS

(Begin Casual Summer Attire, except for Degrees)

July 7, 2005 Bro. Major Gene Brogan was browsing the web and saw the St. James Lodge web site at <http://www.stjameslodge47.org>. He said that, after reading our history, he knew that he had to visit. He was raised in Nitro Lodge No. 170 in Nitro, West Virginia, and he now resides in Nashville, Tennessee. We were blessed by his visit in his fatigue uniform. He had orders to go to Iraq the next Thursday. We pray for him and wish for him the shield of protection by the Great Architect of The Universe during his deployment.

Coincidentally, Worshipful Bro. Streater gave a talk on W:Bro. George Washington. A letter of thanks from the Boy Scouts of America for the \$400 donation from St. James Lodge was read.

July 21, 2005 One Fellow Craft degree was conferred. Wardens' Retreat on August 20 was announced and 5 officers indicated plans to attend. A report was given by Bro. David Dodge, Temple Committee Chairman, on flooding damage and restoration to our ground floor tenant due to a broken fire hydrant on Monday, July 18. A report was given by W:Bro. Adib Shahla on a sturdy being made of security improvements to our entry door on Convention Street, which is unlocked during meetings.

FUTURE EVENTS

July 30 - August 6: Downtown York Rite Bodies will have a Festival.
August 20: Wardens' Retreat/Workshop
August 27 (Saturday): St. James has accepted a request, by M.W.: Grand Master Harold Ballard, to host a Masonic Play titled "A Rose Upon The Altar" at a **special open meeting (with wives and meal)** of the 13th District Masons. Schedule is 11:30AM Fellowship, Noon Lunch, and 1:30PM Play.

(End Casual Summer Attire)

September 1 (Thursday): **GUEST NIGHT Open Meeting with wives. 6:00PM fellowship, 6:30PM dinner.**
Sep. 15 Remembrance Night: Deceased Brothers
September 17-18: Baton Rouge Valley of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite will hold its Fall Reunion.
Oct. 6 **Past Masters' Night (Open/meal 6:30)***
Oct. 20 Masonic Education Program
Nov. 3 St. John the Evangelist, Election of Officers for 2006
Nov. 17 **Thanksgiving Program (Open/meal 6:30) ***
Dec. 1 TBA
Dec. 15 **Installation of 2006 Officers(Open/meal 6:30)**

Other Masonic Events -

Downtown York Rite Bodies meet regularly on the 1st Saturday of each month at 8:00 a.m. with breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Scottish Rite Baton Rouge Valley meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Acacia Shrine Temple meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. with dinner at 6:00 p.m.

The Lodge of The Nine Muses, U.D., F.&A.M., meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in the Red Room of St James Lodge. If you are interested in visiting, contact one of the officers to find time, dress code and other details. Ernest Easterly, W.M., Ricks Bowles, S.W., Adib Shala, J.W., Sam Roberts, Treasurer, Larry Moore, Secretary, William Mollere, Chaplain, Naresh Sharma, Senior Deacon, Danny Smith, Master of Ceremonies, Gerard Ruth, Steward, Robert Zinn, Steward, Kristopher Easterly, Tyler
Nov. 9 Lodge of 9 Muses: **Open Table Lodge**
At the Camelot Club, Brother Robert Davis, 33°, Grand Cross, Executive Secretary of the Valley of Guthrie, will be the keynote speaker. See any member for tickets.

Sickness and Relief

We mourn the passing on July 19, 2005 of R.W.: Malcolm Ballard, who for many years was Grand Photographer of the Grand Lodge and other Grand Bodies of Louisiana Masonry.

Remember our sick brethren, which include Dr. Barry C. Scott and Dr. Thomas P. Raggio.

Announcement:

Be advised that our members no longer have free Thursday night parking in the parking lots owned by St James Episcopal Church. They have begun charging for parked cars between the unusual hours of 9:00PM and 2:00AM. Hopefully, the parking garage to the west of the Lodge on Third Street will be completed in a few months and free evening parking will be available there.

WHAT OUR LODGE HAS TAUGHT ME

Text of Joshua Gunn's remarks made to the St. James brethren on July 7, 2005.

Brethren, I asked the Worshipful Master for a few minutes of your time tonight so that I might thank you for your kindness, friendship, and teaching this past year.

I regret to announce that I have accepted a job in Austin, and that tonight will be my last communication at St. James Lodge as a *resident of Baton Rouge*. This does not mean I will not return, for I fully intend to visit with some regularity.

Since I was raised last November, I have had the fortune to visit a number of lodges in the south, and I want to underscore how happy I am to have been initiated in this particular lodge. A fellow Mason who is not a member of this lodge said to me recently that not only was St. James the premiere lodge of Louisiana, but of Texas, Arkansas, and Mississippi as well.

Because of the brethren here, because of your willingness to love, to teach, and to faithfully study the teachings of Freemasonry, I know that St. James is truly my Masonic home. You have raised me, and you shall keep me in more ways than one. Indeed, I stand in good keeping because of what you have taught me.

As a relatively new Master Mason, I recognize that I must be careful in my claims to Masonic knowledge. And while I fully recognize the folly of arrogance, at the end of my remarks I hope you will agree with me when I claim to understand the true teaching and secret of our ancient art. This teaching has many names, but these are just names. This teaching is evoked in many symbols, but these are just symbols.

Indeed, the symbols and ritual handed down to us from our ancient brethren are doubly intended to remind us of the truth at the same time as they impart mystery. The mysteries built into the heart of Masonic symbolism are designed to encourage further study, but in their mystery, they teach us the virtue of humility.

It seems to me anti-Masons, all too eagerly, mistake the mystery of our symbolism for the kinds of secrets that don't exist. Frankly, I'm convinced that a number of us don't quite get the meaning of many of our symbols, either (there are simply so many to learn!).

But I think "not getting it" entirely is an important part of Masonic teaching: it is the humility inspired by not getting it that is the important lesson to be learned. Believe me; the more I read about the Masonic tradition, the more I am reminded of how much I do not know. Being a Master Mason teaches me to pursue Masonic knowledge, but at a patient and measured pace.

If part of the true teaching of Masonry is humility and patience, then I am also saying that the teachings of the fraternity are, for the most part, written in deeds, the things we do, especially the things we do for one another. There is nothing more sublime than 'being good for another'; being for good another is, I think, the essence of humility. In a world beset by righteousness on every side of conflict, we so desperately need the virtue of humility.

In my field of scholarly study, I am asked to spend much time reading the wisdom (and sometimes, of the barbarism) of the ancient Greeks. In the fifth century before the Common Era, Aristotle set down his advice to his son Nichomachus in a book referred to these days as *The Nicomachean Ethics*. One of the reasons I admire our fraternity is because of the ways that it embodies Aristotle's advice, that to be good for another requires us to cultivate virtues particular to our life practices.

So, for example, if I am a medical doctor, being an ethical person requires me to cultivate the virtues of precision, good communication, medical expertise, and above all, the virtue of care.

Using Masonry as an allegorical practice particular to the lives of all good men, Freemasonry similarly encourages the cultivation of certain virtues, or as it is said in my favorite degree, it encourages one to square his actions with the square of virtue.

And what are these virtues? There are many, but perhaps none as important as brotherly love, friendship, charity, and equality before inevitable death.

How does one cultivate Masonic virtues? First, I have learned that one cultivates virtues by understanding that they are lived, not reached or achieved. Aristotle warned his son that trying to live up to some ultimate rule or law meant that one would fail. Cultivating virtues means that you don't have to be perfect. Virtues are embodied and demonstrated in situations; virtues are not rules or laws but character traits, which are usually expressed in behaviors and deeds. Second, Aristotle said that one can only cultivate virtues by copying someone else who embodies them, by copying another virtuous man, or by learning from those who offer their mentorship. Like Aristotle's writings, Masonry has suggested to me that our virtues are not learned by reading books, not even the Holy Scriptures. Virtues are not learned by knowing the complex symbolism that represents them. Rather, virtues like brotherly love, friendship, charity, and equality are learned from a brother who embodies them.

Embodying virtues does not always mean that we will model them. This is because no one is perfect, and humans are complex, contradictory creatures. I have been at a number of Masonic meetings when I have overheard brothers speaking ill of other fellow human beings because of the color of their skin. This deeply saddens and offends me, as it seems to contradict my obligation as a Master Mason; but this behavior does not mean that these brothers are not otherwise good and virtuous people. Such behavior does mean, however, that in that particular moment, they were not Masonic. I think we should be careful to remember that virtues are constantly cultivated, not achieved. Every succeeding day we better realize the virtue of equality that we teach because that is precisely what Masonry is about: our virtues are not achieved, but embodied, moving into new ways of expressing themselves as the fraternity evolves over time and with the times.

I know the true teaching of Freemasonry because I have seen it embodied for me in many, many moments. You all voted to include me, despite long hair and some ear jewelry, modeling not only your progressive thinking but also your commitment to brotherly love and the equality of all men. I have seen the virtues of Masonry in the stewardship of Brother Zinn, who shepherded me into this lodge and who teaches me the wonder of being alive every day. I have seen it in the friendship of Tim Atkins, who always has a kind and jovial word to go with his charity. I have seen it in brother Shala, who kindly taught me never to touch my apron. I have seen it in brother Blanchard, who never forgets a name. I have seen it in brother Deadman, who has counseled and fed me, well. Indeed, I have seen it in all the brothers of this lodge, who have kindly welcomed me into their fellowship with little more than my promise to be good for others, with a promise to attempt to cultivate the virtues of charity, brotherly love, friendship, and equality.

Finally, I say that I have seen the true teaching of Freemasonry because of my mentor and friend, Bro. Calvin Elliott. No other Mason whom I have met better embodies the teachings and virtues of Freemasonry. Because of his virtuous character, I have a model to emulate and follow. I'm extremely thankful to the lodge for providing bro. Cal as a coach and mentor, and for recognizing what a model he is for all brethren. I thank Cal for his patience and his parenting, and for illustrating so well the virtues spoken about in our esoteric work.

I'm sorry to have gone on so, but it was important for me to thank the lodge for the experience it has provided me, and for teachings that I will never forget. I will carry the memory and teachings of St. James Lodge with me in the short term as I move westward, but always as I am traveling to the East.

JOSHUA GUNN will be relocated to Austin at the time of this printing; he can be reached at slewfoot@mail.utexas.edu.

My thanks for the contributions to this issue of the news letter! Send newsletter submissions to Bob Zinn, bz@chem.lsu.edu



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JULY 2005 — AUGUST 2005