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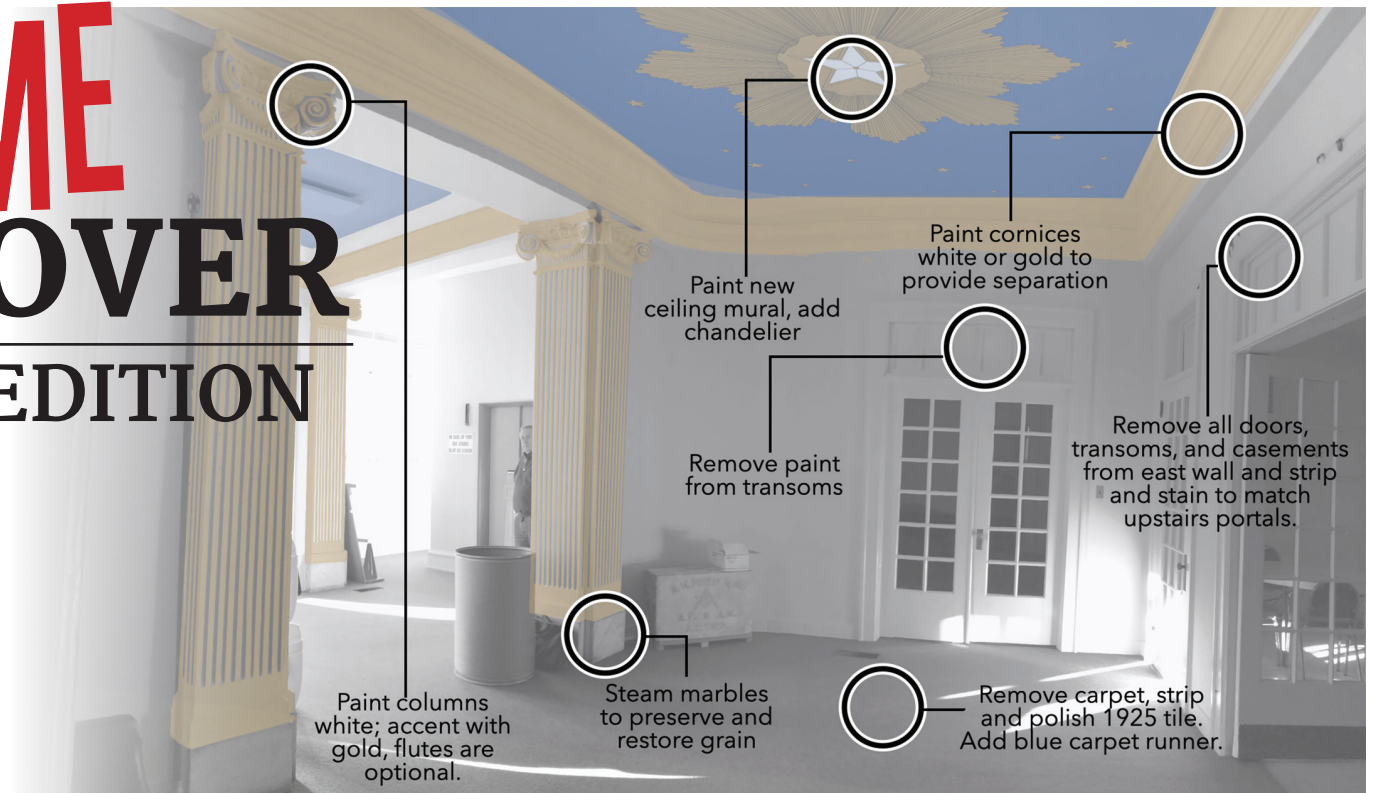
Oxford, North Carolina

March/April 2021

EXTREME MAKEOVER

LODGE EDITION

New lodge outreach program will 'Help you start to dream again'



*By Beth Grace
Mason Editor*

What does your lodge building say to the world?

Does it welcome? Does it please the eye? What message does it send? Does it make you want to step in and attend a stated? If you were interested in asking the question, would you be willing to walk in?

Every lodge in North Carolina can meet those criteria, and the Grand Lodge stands ready to help with a first-of-its kind program designed to help each lodge help itself. And the only money the lodge will spend is on its own improvements.

Matthew Robbins, the new GL outreach director and administrative assistant, holds a Master's in architecture with an eye for design.

He's also a major history buff.

He was the leader behind the campaign to finish the Memorial

Belltower on the North Carolina State University campus after he had discovered it was never completed as designed. The project sought to follow the 1920 plans that called for a bell carillon instrument, playing cabin, and stairway leading to them.

The project will be completed this year, exactly a century after the cornerstone of the tower was laid and dedicated by NC Freemasons in 1921.

The Grand Lodge is offering his experience and training at no charge to lodges wishing to fix things up, repair and renovate – and don't know where to start. He helps lodges determine what needs to be fixed, how it can be done, and even works out a financial plan that lodges can implement.

"This is a face-to-face on-site interaction between the Grand

Lodge and lodges in need of physical help," he says. "But it's about more than just fixing things up. It's about who we are as Masons. Who we are in our communities. It's about how we speak to the world through our physical presence about our cultural and charitable presence."

Working with Grand Secretary Walt Clapp and Jonathan Underwood, assistant to the Grand Secretary, they created a program that helps lodges pinpoint, prioritize and make needed fixes at their own pace and on their own budget.

Robbins is a consulting resource (a resource that normally could cost thousands of dollars) who offers an expert's eye to lodges seeking help in fixing major problems, renovating rooms or simply trying to restore their lodges to their original glory.

■ see MAKEOVER, page 2



Derek Sollom, senior steward of State College #770, gives a Gastonia Temple lobby column a fresh coat of white paint. Top photo, an example of the digital resources Brother Robbins creates for each lodge.

MAKEOVER, from page 1

He doesn't just look around and give advice. He studies blueprints, examines original architecture and studies why the lodge was built as it was. He seeks and often finds historical changes to the building that were made for good – and sometimes for expedience and low cost.

He also works with brethren to find a champion or two among the members who can lead the lodge to find ways to fund repairs or renovations, to determine exactly what they can and should do to send the message to the world that Masons welcome inquirers, and that they play a vital role in their communities.

He can consult on how to make repairs and create a project plan as he works toward his licensure as an architect. He uses digital displays and clear, understandable language to report on what he has found and shares it with brothers who will lead the work.

The program is not just about beautification, it's about Masonry itself.

Of the 774 lodges that have opened in the history of the NC Grand Lodge (775 if you count Prometheus Lodge UD), half are still "alive," and half are "demised," meaning they are extinct, or have merged into others and dissolved.

"When lodges stop working, culture is lost. Masonry becomes less visible and the face of Masonry in the community disappears," Robbins says. "A lodge building is so much more than a building. History happens here. Masonry happens here."

For Grand Secretary Clapp, who retires from the office he has held for 25 years on May 1, this is an important legacy for the Grand lodge itself to leave behind.

"Most lodges in trouble did not get into that condition overnight, and they won't get out of it overnight. But they truly can get out of it," he says.

"We can help you start to dream again. Dream what you can do. Dream who you can be in your community. Dream of welcoming good men through your doors."

As Masonry looks toward its

own future and works to welcome new brothers, the public face of our lodges tell the story, he says.

"To me, I wonder who wants to join something that's in a state of disrepair? It says something about Masonry that it shouldn't. We are builders. Our buildings need to be in great shape," he says.

No Grand Lodge is in the financial position to help repair hundreds of lodges. Local brethren need to make that decision and raise or find funding on their own.

But now, and only in North Carolina, when they ask the NC Grand Lodge for help, they will get true, tested guidance on how to make change happen.

"Brothers saw an example of what it could be and even in this case, how they could do it themselves."

Robbins is working with a few lodges and temples now, and has digital and paper presentations that show what can be done and why each lodge was built the way it was to begin with.

He cites as one example, work under way at the Gastonia Masonic Temple. Robbins visited in 2018 and spent days measuring, studying and prowling around the historic building. Over the years, it has been well used – and shows it in places.

Robbins worked long hours with a team of brothers dedicated to making change happen and to finding funding to make their dream happen.

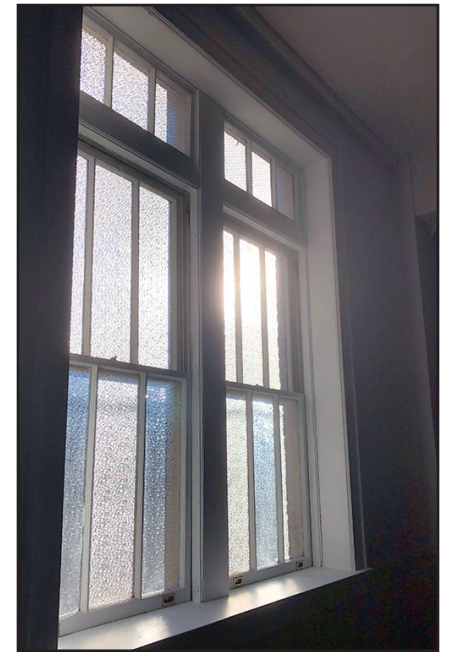
He even did some of the hands-on work himself as a way to show brothers how it can be done. He took an old window that had been painted over home, dedicated countless hours stripping the old paint and adding new coats, and restoring it to full working order. He drove it back from Raleigh to Gastonia and installed it. That window has inspired the brothers and they are eager to continue the work.

"Brothers saw an example of what it could be and even in this case, how they could do it themselves," he says, "That made a huge difference.

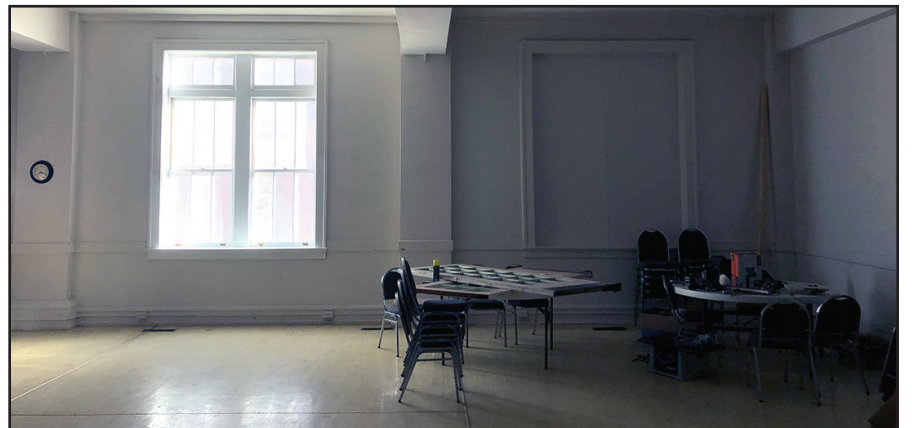
BEFORE



AFTER



Brother Robbins took home a painted-over window from the Gastonia Masonic Temple, refurbished it, brought it back and installed it in its former place.



Once you see it, you believe it can happen."

Any lodge can and should seek help.

Robbins is available for advice and motivation as that work goes along.

Once the work is done, he encourages lodges to invite their neighbors in to see the changes, to welcome the community inside. Call brothers who have drifted away and invite them for dinner (oost-COVID, of course). Welcome widows for a visit.

"Let the community see who you are" he says. "Give them a tour, Hold a coffee hour. If you don't tell (or show) them who you are, they'll come up with their own conclusions."

Interested in getting some advice? Contact Brother Matthew at the Grand Lodge at 919-787-2021 or email him at mrobbins@glnc.us. 📧

Here's what happens when you call Matthew Robbins:

- He talks with lodge leaders and brothers to determine the need and the vision.
- He does an on-site assessment, checking resources, the state of the building, etc.
- He creates a digital slide deck to show what's broken and what can be fixed, and ideas for fixing them. He also offers some financial information, demographics and project planning advice to round out the full picture. Oh, he can even draw up a landscaping plan for your lodge.
- He recommends an outcome – a goal the lodge agrees is reachable.
- That's when he steps back, and the lodge begins the real work of making the fixes.

Clapp announces plan to retire this year

Walt Clapp, the longest-serving Grand Secretary in United States Freemasonry, will retire in May.

It's not goodbye forever, he says.

"I look forward to continuing my travels in search of light with you, but just from a little different point of view."

Theophilus Walton Clapp III has worked at the Grand Lodge for 42 years – 25 of them as Grand Secretary. He was elected to that position after his mentor and friend, Robert P. "Pete" Dudley, retired. Dudley would pass away just three days into his retirement.

WB Clapp, a 47-year Mason, steps down as his daughter graduates from college.

"Over the last several years I have often been asked when I would retire. ... My stock answer was always, 'My daughter is in college,' assuming it would be interpreted the year when my daughter would graduate from college. My daughter, Katherine Anh is now a senior at North Carolina State University and will graduate this May," he says. "Let me tell you, I am one proud daddy. As you may have surmised, her milestone is also a milestone for me in more ways than one."

Walt was born in Marion, the son of Theophilus Walton Clapp Jr. and Vashti Fredonia Dulin Clapp. He is married to Betty Connette.



Longest-serving Grand Secretary in the U.S., Walt Clapp, to retire in May.

He attended Western Piedmont Community College and is a member of Mystic Tie #237 and Mosaic #762. In 1974, he surprised his father with his petition for Masonry, even though the senior Clapp was serving as Master of the lodge at the time. Walt got a petition from a friend on the local police force, who slipped it to the lodge secretary. Until his name was read aloud, the elder Clapp had no idea his son was taking the first step toward becoming a Mason. His father would go on to be Master for all three of Walt's degrees.

Walt says he looks forward to retirement but will stay as busy as always. No sleeping in for him.

He will be heading back into his garage workshop, where the skilled cabinet maker builds furniture. He says he's thinking of making a Morris chair, among other things.

And he'll spend time with his wife and daughter and the newest addition to the Clapp family: a black lab puppy on the way from the breeder.

Grand Master David Wicker, who thanked Clapp for his service and led a standing ovation for him when he announced his retirement at the quarterly meeting of the Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes, says he will share in May the name of the brother who will serve out the term. ⚔

Q. How many district meetings have you attended?

A. 1,396 meetings scheduled; Attended more than 1,000

Q. Have you visited EVERY lodge in the state? If not, how many?

A. Only about 25 not visited

Q. How many Grand Masters have you worked with?

A. 43

Q. How many miles have you driven? How many motels/hotels have you stayed in?

A. Well over 1.5 million miles. Countless motels (real cheap dives)

Q. How many cars have you used up?

A. 15

Q. How many pounds of barbecue have you consumed?

A. I don't know but I discovered that waving a Masonic apron would make a hog quiver!

See Walt's column on page 6

Brother thankful for fraternal support after attack on him

By Beth Grace
Mason Editor

Nobody is more grateful these days than Brother Tommy Eller.

Nobody.

The 53-year Mason, a member of Eureka Masonic Lodge No. 283, says he can't thank brothers and sisters enough for the support, love, cards, meals and good wishes that flooded in after he was attacked and injured by two assailants late one night at his home.

The Jan. 20 attack left the 93-year-old Montfort medal recipient hospitalized for days with a brain bruise and other wounds.

Three men, who called Eller by his name during the attack, have been arrested and are facing charges in the case.



Brother Eller told Rowan County Sheriff's Department investigators that he was attacked by men wearing masks as he opened the door to let his dog out at about 9 p.m.

The men pushed him back inside the house, kicking and beating him and demanding to know where his valuables were.

After a few minutes, Eller said he stopped moving, and his attackers fled after going through his home. Following a 911 call for help, Eller was conscious when help arrived. He suffered cuts on his head and lost three teeth in the attack.

Authorities say the attack may be linked to others in the area.

Brother Eller, who returned home from the hospital by early February, says he is overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and support from

the Craft.

"Please let all of my brothers and sisters know that they have helped me more than they will ever know," he says. "I don't know why this happened, but I know that their good thoughts and wishes have helped me recover faster and have helped make things right at my home again."

He wanted to share a special thanks to members of the Rowan County Sheriff's Department and local EMS and fire, many of whom are Masons. ⚔

Photo credit: Bill Wallin of Winston-Salem Scottish Rite Valley

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THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY IN NORTH CAROLINA IS TO RAISE THE MORAL, SOCIAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND SPIRITUAL CONSCIENCE OF SOCIETY BY TEACHING THE ANCIENT AND ENLIGHTENING PHILOSOPHICAL TENETS OF BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF, AND TRUTH, WHICH ARE EXPRESSED OUTWARDLY THROUGH SERVICE TO GOD, FAMILY, COUNTRY, AND SELF UNDER THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD WITHIN THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Facebook posts tell a tale of a return to normalcy

Something feels different. I'm not sure why, but it feels like things are changing. Like we're getting close to maybe, nearly, almost, quite possibly back to normal. I am writing in a whisper. Don't want to just say it outright: *We're getting back to normal*. That would jinx it.

Still, something feels different. The pandemic numbers are slowing and dropping. Restrictions made by government and by Freemasons are easing. Vaccinations, for those in favor of them, are giving some folks a new lease on life. Others are doing their best while they wait to keep safe in masks and washing hands.

It's time to celebrate. It's time to come back to life. Even while restrictions are in place, we can rejoice that brothers are coming back to lodges, in measured numbers for now, but at some point – life will return to normal.

It's clear even from social media posts that a return is the heart's desire of brethren in all 370 lodges.

Say what you will about how useful social media is in everyday life, sometimes it's positively poetic.

Take this question, recently posted by a brother on the Grand Lodge Facebook page:

Have you ever contemplated what you expected to receive from joining a Masonic Lodge? Ask yourself in reflection, What do I get out of being a Mason? Be honest and post your thoughts here. Research your answer inside yourself.

Many answers and great stories followed, all of them filled with love of the Craft. Let me share a few.

Brother Todd Derksen of Wilmington #319, then a resident of Rhode Island, had just been raised at a local lodge, when he was summoned to a gathering meant to help the wife of a brother who had passed suddenly. As the wives went to visit with the wife, the Master turned to the brothers and announced that another brother needed firewood.

"Like a herd of animals, the brethren that were there just got up from their chairs and we all piled into three pickup trucks and literally drove to the middle of nowhere. ... We then began to load the wood into those three

trucks and we then drove to Jesse's house to stack the wood at his house. ... It was on that day that I had learned a life lesson, just what I had stumbled into. Yes, it all began with the passing of my father. Harmony Lodge was this circle of family that could be counted on, whenever and wherever you needed them, but



Fred Whitty

I learned to subdue some passions, that I needed to, while increasing those I needed to. The greatest was, I improved myself through Masonry.

I improved my mind by memorizing catechisms, Degrees and Orders. I learned how to run meetings. I became ...

more importantly I needed to be there for them. The lodge taught me to put others ahead of my own needs. My lodge is my family, they are my circle."

Brother Ryan Ziegler, a relatively new member of Kedron #387, says "Masonry has made me a better man. Not because of our business meetings we have. Not even because of the Brotherhood I have with my Masonic Family. For me, I'm a better man because I do everything I can to live my obligations.

"In my line of work, I don't get very many compliments. When I arrest someone for missing court and they have been on the run for months, they typically don't like to see me. When someone tells me that I'm a good man, it hits differently now. It means much more.

Even while I'm arresting their loved one, they still call me a good man. That is what being a Mason means to me now. Honestly, being a good man and working to become better."

For some, the work of Masonry speaks volumes.

"I learn something – better said as 'I gain insight' – every time I see a degree, and especially when I'm giving one of the lectures," wrote PM Thomas Pope of Stedman #730.

PM Fred Whitty of St. John's #3 would agree.

"I learned to subdue some passions, that I needed to, while increasing those I needed

FROM THE GRAND MASTER



What came you here to do?

By R. David Wicker Jr.
Grand Master

What came you here to do? The obvious sequel to my first article, *Whence Came You?*

However, as I was finishing that article, the events of the day derailed where I was going. That having been addressed, we now return to our regularly scheduled program, already in progress.

We all know that Freemasons cannot solicit, recruit, or even invite men to become members of our Fraternity. Every man must come to us of his own free will and accord. As such, we all knock at the door of Freemasonry for a variety of reasons.

Some knock at the door seeking knowledge and transformation. Last year, Grand Master Bradshaw shared his story. He told of being raised by his mother and grandmother and having grown up without a father in his home. When his children were born, he came to Freemasonry looking for role models to show him how to be the best father he could be. He sought the knowledge and wisdom of our Craft to help transform him into a better man and a better father.

Some come for friendship, fellowship and out of their respect for someone they know or knew to be a Mason. Freemasons should always gather as a group of men who can best work and best agree. There should never be conflict and disharmony within our lodges.

Even though we may disagree, we should never be disagreeable. This allows us to enjoy each other's company when we gather, be it inside or outside of the lodge. We often see this trait in the men we most admire. Perhaps it was your father, your grandfather or someone you looked to as a mentor.

Our respect and admiration of these traits, and the men who exhibit them, could be the reason we are led to Freemasonry's door.

Others may come out of a desire to be a part of an ancient order and to participate in our ritualist work or in the charitable work we do. Often, we want to be a part of something bigger than we are individually.

We see Freemasons in our communities helping others through barbecue chicken fundraisers or Brunswick stew sales. Freemasons participate in Habitat for Humanity to

help others have their own home. We sponsor blood drives to help the Red Cross maintain an adequate blood supply.

Perhaps they come having learned of our work at the Masonic Home for Children in Oxford or WhiteStone, our retirement community in Greensboro. Within them is a desire to aid others who are distressed.

Although our personal motivations for knocking at the door may vary, as long as they are virtuous and pure, why we came is not really the issue.

You see, we are never asked why we came here.

We are asked what we came here to do.

Fortunately, Freemasonry teaches us how we should contemplate the answer to this most important question. As we know, the answer is two-fold.

First, we are instructed that we must learn to subdue our passions. In other words, we must learn to control our emotions.

Second, we are to improve ourselves in Masonry.

The reason this question must be answered in two parts is that we will never be able to improve ourselves in Masonry until we first learn to subdue our passions and control our emotions.

In our world today, there are too many who cannot or will not control their passions and emotions. As a result, without even realizing it, they are not in control. Instead, they are being controlled by their own emotions. Those without the ability to control their passions and emotions become susceptible to manipulation by others who use these heightened emotions against them.

Anger and hatred are strong, passionate emotions that we must have the ability to subdue. Anger is often exemplified by an extreme dislike and hostility toward someone or something that, in your mind, is wrong. Hatred for someone or something causes us to spend much of the time fixating on our anger. We are contemptuous of and have contempt or dislike for that person or that thing.

Anger and hatred also have physical and emotional manifestations. They cause our heart rate and blood pressure to increase. We become irritable, cynical and hypercritical of others. We

even become aggressive and violent.

It is for these exact reasons that over the course of my career, I have refused to practice in the area of domestic law. Those going through a divorce often bring their toxic attitudes into the case and nothing you do or say can make them change. Their decision making is driven only by their desire to hurt the other person.

When their anger and hatred is not subdued, they lose the ability to be reasonable and rational. They would rather make a bad decision and incur a personal loss, so long as that decision causes the other person pain or injury.

What is fair, best and wise is overwhelmed by their anger and hatred. They even exhibit a sense of pleasure and relief knowing their actions may have hurt someone else; even when

those same actions may have hurt them as well.

So, how do we learn to subdue these passions? There are a number of techniques, but I would suggest that we first take a mental break and contemplate

what we should do or say instead of reacting to the situation that confronts us. Take a moment. Take a breath. Collect your thoughts.

Remember, you cannot be smart and mad at the same time. You can be smart or you can be mad, but you can almost never be both. Anger and hatred cloud one's thoughts and abilities to make good decisions.

Once you have taken the time to contemplate what is before you, turn your focus and energy to resolving the issue that is causing the anger. Take heed of the words of the late John Lennon: "There are no problems, only solutions." If there is something that makes you angry, remember the situation is actually presenting you with an opportunity to make a change for the better. But if you focus only on the problem, the fact that you are angry or that you hate the situation, that is all you will see.

As you work to address the situation, remember that forgiveness can be as powerful as the anger and hatred, but in a positive way. It causes the negative and destructive feelings to dissipate and fade away. It allows peace and calm to return. So, be forgiving and just let it go.

Remember, you cannot be smart and mad at the same time. You can be smart or you can be mad, but you can almost never be both.

Retirement just a new chapter in my story

Brethren, as you know, Friday, April 30, is my last day as Grand Secretary. But it's a new chapter, not an ending. I look forward to catching up on some personal projects around my shop, beaming and bragging about my daughter's successes, and raising my new black Labrador puppy.

But, like any good book, as I turn the page, I like to think for a moment over what I've already read. So, allow me to reflect for a moment on some previous chapters.

All of this retirement stuff got me to thinking about my first job. When I was in junior high — age 11 or 12 — I took a job in Dr. Parker's dental office in Marion, North Carolina. My home, the funeral home my father worked in, and Dr. Parker's office were all on a three-way junction at Main and Crawford Street.

I worked twice a week at Dr. Parker's office after school — taking out the trash, sweeping, mopping the floors, and anything else I was asked to do. Each time, usually Tuesdays and Fridays, Dr. Parker paid me a half-dollar for my labors (later raised to \$1). His office was on the first floor of an old house with apartments upstairs and a huge lawn out back, which I mowed once a week for \$3.

I'd run the mop over the floor as WBRM-AM played soft "Shangri-la" tunes and as I listened to Dr. Parker's pneumatic drill as he plugged another filling in some poor soul. I'm sure the tenants could hear the drill as he fired it up.

I remember the clink of the syringes hitting the sides of the glass cylinder where they were stored. Of course, in those days, they just rinsed the needles out and dropped them in the jar. And, they were dull. I remember asking Dr. Parker to skip the needle and just drill — it hurt less.

It took me a long time to equate a

dentist to much more than a glorified blacksmith. But, maybe he used the old ones because my check-ups were free. I still have anxiety about going to the dentist.

Though I worked near the end of the day, I got to know Dr. Parker a little better, as well as his assistant Fannie Mae Snipes. Dr. Parker



By Walt Clapp
Grand Secretary

was a kind man with a high-pitched voice. I can still hear him say to his patients, "Spit it out, please!" I would snicker to myself every time he started concocting the amalgam for a filling and prepped his victim's mouth. He'd look up at Fannie, readying for the amalgam and yell, "Hit it, Fannie!"

Fannie Mae was sweet, but a gossip. I remember her standing in the

office door looking up and down the street to see if anyone would come by with any news, or to see if any new "tenants" were delivered to the funeral home. On the ride into school in the morning I would see her open the office, then trek out to the Winn-Dixie to buy day-old bread.

She dressed in all white — white dress, white hose, and white shoes. And, those shoes aggravated the snot out of me. At least once a week she went back to the bathroom and sprayed white shoe polish on her shoes. Did she ever put a towel or piece of paper under her feet? No. I can still vividly see the outline of her soles, the tracked polish on that green linoleum floor, and me huffing at all the scrubbing it was going to take to clean it away.

About 4 o'clock one day, I was across the street at my Dad's funeral home. I grabbed a pack of peanuts and a Coke and started munching away. Mid-chew and mouth full, Fannie Mae called Dad's office. "Walt," she said, "We've had a cancellation. Come get a cleaning."

Dad motioned me on, and I tried to suck the peanut bits out from between my teeth. As I walked in, I saw Fannie Mae's white outlined

footprints on the bathroom floor. I quit trying to clean my teeth and thought to myself, "Well, I'm gonna make them work for this."

That's how careers go. A little money, a little music, some funny times, some errant shoe polish, and a stray peanut kernel here and there. You got to work for it, and you've got to work through it.

When I was Master of my lodge, Mystic Tie #237 in Marion, I got a letter from the Grand Master that my lodge was chosen to host the Grand Master's District meeting. Like any Master that's told he's going to host the Grand Master, I sweated it. But, after that one call I never heard from the DDGM. He wasn't much of a DDGM. In fact, he was downright sorry, but his sorriness probably helped me get my job with the Grand Lodge.

Once I calmed myself down and conferred with Dad, who was secretary of the lodge and had hosted the Grand Master seven years before me, I called the other lodges in the district, planned the meeting, arranged the RSVPs, strategized the meal, and organized the preparation of the lodge.

I made sure the various Masters were going to be present and all the lodges represented. Our DDGM was a no-show, but the meeting went off like clockwork, I wound up receiving the Grand Master and introduced him to the brethren.

I did not know it at the time, but Grand Secretary Pete Dudley was on the lookout for an assistant. He needed help planning and executing the Annual Communication and all the other things I've come to learn the Grand Lodge office handles. Apparently, the success of my district meeting brought my name to his attention, and within a couple weeks I received an invitation to meet him and the Grand Master in Raleigh.

I made the long, long, long trek to Raleigh — there was no complete interstate section in those days, just old Highway 70 — in September 1979. I did not accept the position at first. I was recently married, had bought a house, and was newly

employed in an oil delivery venture.

Pete called me several times to ask if I had had made my mind up. I couldn't refuse. I promoted my Senior Warden and left for Raleigh that same month. I returned to the lodge only one more time that year to finish out my term as Master.

The office was a little different at that time, but not unlike our operations today. Everything was manual — typewriting, card filling, financial ledgers. Jean House held tenure over everyone in the office. She arrived with her uncle, Grand Secretary Bill McIver, in the mid-1950s. Pete and Joyce Watson, another secretary, arrived about the same time in the mid-1960s. Reynold Davenport doubled as Assistant to the Grand Secretary and editor of *The North Carolina Mason* — not unlike his nephew, Ric Carter.

A young Australian lady named Suzanne Ray also worked in the office, but she left for California shortly after my arrival and Cornelia Doherty interviewed for her position. The rest, of course, is history.

The office is like a family, sometimes it functions, sometimes it argues, but to work here you always look out for each other — no exceptions — and that is one of the great secrets that keeps it running so well.

I think more than anything I want you to know what good hands your Grand Lodge office is in. You have the grandest of Grand Lodge employees anywhere — and it was truly my honor to work alongside them: Cornelia Doherty, Vicki Lam, Hayley Moll, Jonathan Underwood, and our most recent hire (though longtime volunteer) Matthew Robbins.

Brethren, you will not be disappointed in their execution of the duties of the office, and they know better than most the attention to detail required to benefit this fraternity and serve the brethren.

I cannot convey what an honor it has been to serve you and this fraternity and work with so many competent and capable office staff and Grand Masters. Of course, like cleaning the peanuts out of your

■ see STORY page 7

■ WICKER, from page 5

Now that we are at peace, now that our thoughts are clear and calm, how do we improve ourselves in Masonry? The answer to that question may be endless. Let us begin with who and what we are supposed to be. We are taught that Freemasonry is a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. But what does this mean?

Referring to Freemasonry as a system relates to the organized set of rules or guidelines that when followed, accomplishes a desired purpose or result.

Morality is a set of standards that allow us to live together and support one another through the universal principles of goodness and rightness.

The system of morality being veiled in allegory refers to the fact that our tenets and principles are taught and interpreted in an indirect manner and, through our ritualistic work, their true meanings are revealed. Finally, we illustrate our morality through the use of our symbols.

In each of our three degrees, as well as in the degrees in the Scottish Rite, York Rite, Shrine and Eastern Star, we use symbols to teach the lessons associated with that particular degree. The most common of our symbols is the square and compasses. Almost every Mason wears a ring displaying these symbols.

The square represents the Square of Virtue. By this symbol, we are taught that we should examine each our thoughts, words and actions and be certain they comply with our system of morality. The square of virtue should be the rule and guide to our conduct with all mankind.

The compasses remind us that as we go through our everyday life, our passions and desires should be contained within the bounds of our system of morality. In addition, a Mason should remember that within the points of the compasses are contained the friendship, morality and brotherly love he is to exhibit to everyone.

If you have not done so, pick up a copy of the *North Carolina Lodge Manual*. You will know it by its more common name, the *Babnson Manual*. You may have used it as you have prepared for the degree work. But that is not its limitations.

We say that Freemasonry makes good men better. Merely memorizing words does not make men better. Freemasonry is the system by which good men make themselves better. But for that to happen, we must apply the lessons we are taught through the allegory and symbols.

The entire work is a discussion of Masonic symbolism and how those symbols illustrate our Masonic system of morality. What are the meanings of the point within the circle, the rough ashlar, the perfect ashlar, the orders of architecture, the beehive, the hourglass or the other various Masonic symbols? Have you thought about what they are teaching us? Have you tried to apply these lessons to your everyday life?

My brothers, "What came you here to do?" is a most serious question that you should be asking yourself every day. When you answer the question, are you parroting standard responses just to move on to the next question or are you reflecting on the meaning of that question and how you, as a Freemason, should be living your life and leading your commu-

nity? Only one of these answers is making you a better man and a better Mason.

We say that Freemasonry makes good men better. Merely memorizing words does not make men better. Freemasonry is the system by which good men make themselves better. But for that to happen, we must apply the lessons we are taught through the allegory and symbols.

Finally, my Brothers, I will leave you with this: Freemasons are charged to do good unto all. As this instruction is applied to us, there are no exceptions and there are no limitations. We are to soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortunes, to be compassionate to their miseries and to restore peace to their troubled minds.

We do this through kindness.

Sadly, for some, kindness is difficult. That is because it involves conscious choice. To be kind, one must freely, sincerely and voluntarily give of their time, talent and resources to make the lives of others better.

If Freemasons give to others genuine acts of love, compassion, generosity and service, we will surely make the world a better place. In so doing, it is quite likely that we will discover why good men knock at the door of Freemasonry. It is because they too will have the desire to learn to subdue their passions and improve themselves in Masonry. ☞

■ NORMALCY, from page 4

to. The greatest was, I improved myself through Masonry. I improved my mind by memorizing catechisms, Degrees and Orders," he says. "I learned how to run meetings. I became a more confident and improved speaker. I met new friends and their families. I learned where to place our GREAT national flag in a meeting and by attending so many Masonic meetings, I have been honored to recite the Pledge of Allegiance many times a week. But, to improve yourself, you have to participate. I have participated and it has been an honor."

And for so many others, family ties led to a deeper dedication to Masonry.

"I at first wanted to follow in my father and grandfather's footsteps," says Tom Imler, PM of Hiram #40. "As I advanced, I knew that I had gained brothers all over the world. I never met my grandfather, and my dad died before he could raise me. It made me want to be the best Mason and man I could be."

How would you answer that question? ☞



**Grand Lodge of North Carolina
A. F. & A. M.**
Private group · 4.2K members

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■ STORY, from page 6

teeth, sometimes it has been a challenge. And, like Fannie Mae's footprints, the imprint is always going to be there — perhaps as an agitation at first, but always a story in time.

Brethren, as I have written you before, you all have a story. That's what makes us human. Our stories bind us closer together as one and help us realize we're not all that different from each other; we just tell our tale from a little different point of view, and that's helps us all see the bigger picture. Of course, that's what Freemasonry is, isn't it? Being able to slowly learn to see the bigger picture.

I'll never be too far away. Call me (the number will stay the same). Talk to me. Tell me your story. And, we'll be all the more blessed to have known each other. ☞

Proposed Code Amendments for 2021

Here is a quick review of amendments to the Code being proposed for consideration at the 2021 Annual Communication. Several amendment groups initially offered for the 2020 meeting were delayed due to the pandemic's impact on the schedule and format. Those amendments are indicated with the label **(Held over)**.

AMENDMENT GROUP 1

(Held over from the 2020 Annual Communication)



Submitted by the Board of General Purposes

This amendment would require lodges to fully insure their property as per North Carolina law. Failure to do so would disallow any lodge to seek assistance from other lodges.

AMENDMENT GROUP 2 (Held over)



Submitted by Cannon Memorial Lodge #626

This amendment would allow a lodge to vote on petitions for the degrees collectively.

AMENDMENT GROUP 3 (Held over)



Submitted by the Grand Secretary

This amendment would allow a lodge, if it wanted to, to open on the First Degree and conduct its business.

AMENDMENT GROUP 4 (Held over)



Submitted by Eagle #19

This amendment proposes to resolve a conflict in The Code concerning motions to close debate in a subordinate lodge.

AMENDMENT GROUP 5 (Held over)



Submitted by the Grand Secretary

This amendment would require consolidating lodges to deed its property to the consolidated lodge. It would also allow the lodge Trustees to fulfill their roles as executors of the lodge's property until all property is sold or transferred.

AMENDMENT GROUP 6 (Held over)



Submitted by William G. Hill #218

These amendments would allow the estate of a deceased member to purchase an endowed membership for the member. It also increases the Veteran's and Memorial Endowed memberships cost.

AMENDMENT GROUP 7



Submitted by Past Grand Master P. Shaun Bradshaw

This amendment would raise the minimum initiation fee in order to keep up with inflation as the current minimum initiation fee was set more than a century ago.

AMENDMENT GROUP 8



Submitted by Past Grand Master P. Shaun Bradshaw

This amendment would remove certain outdated and poorly phrased Masonic offenses from the Code.

AMENDMENT GROUP 9



Submitted by Past Grand Master P. Shaun Bradshaw

This amendment would make obsolete sections of The Code deeming professional gambling, legal gambling, or operating a business where legal gambling takes place a Masonic offense. It would also make it a Masonic offense to cast a negative ballot against a petitioner due to his race, color, creed, or nation of origin.

AMENDMENT GROUP 10



Submitted by Semper Fidelis #680

The amendment states that all service awards shall be presented by the Grand Master or his representative.

AMENDMENT GROUP 10 SUBSTITUTE



Submitted by the Grand Secretary

This amendment aligns the process of creating, delivering, and presenting service awards to lodges and members into current practice.

AMENDMENT GROUP 11



Submitted by the Grand Secretary

This amendment creates a Grand Lodge Committee on Philanthropy to review and report all aspects of the Grand Lodge's charitable and philanthropic endeavors to the Grand Lodge. The amendment also consolidates the Grand Lodge and subordinate lodge committees on the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford and the Committee on WhiteStone into this one committee, and further makes the subordinate lodge committee on DeMolay optional.

AMENDMENT GROUP 12



Submitted by Allen Graham #695

This amendment permits any Mason to object to the passing or raising of a candidate in any lodge.

AMENDMENT GROUP 13



Submitted by Lux Libertas #772

This amendment establishes rules and regulations governing lodges' ability to hold virtual communications during times of emergency.

AMENDMENT GROUP 13 SUBSTITUTE



Submitted by the Grand Secretary

This amendment simplifies a lodge's ability to hold virtual communications.

Masons: Make your mom proud

Our mothers were our first and best friends. They guided, inspired and loved us into adulthood. They taught us to abide by the Golden Rule, to help others and to leave the world better than we found it.

How can we thank our moms – and women who have been like moms to us? As mom used to say ... how about doing a good deed for someone?

For Mother's Day 2021, consider honoring your mother – and other special women in your life – with a gift in her honor.

You can make your gift and provide recognition information here:

<https://mfnc.org/our-charities/campaign-for-whitestone>. It just takes a minute!

If you make your gift by April 30, we can send a note to your honoree in time for Mother's Day on May 9. If your special honoree is deceased, you can designate a gift in her memory.

Questions? Email Dee Blake, NCMF Western Region Development Director, at dblake@mfnc.org or call her at 919-395-0959.

So listen to your mom. Send her a little love for Mother's Day!



Field trip sparked interest in Masonry

Giving a tour of NASCAR shop to Shrine Bowl players gave Knuckles a closeup look

By Thomas Pope
Stedman #730

Freemasonry has had its share of famous racers.

England's Sir Malcolm Campbell set nine land-speed records and was the first person to drive an automobile over 300 miles per hour – all the way back in 1935.

Ohio's Sam Hornish Jr., winner of the Indianapolis 500 in 2006 and three IndyCar championships, has been a member of Omega #564 for 20 years.

David Ragan, a victor in NASCAR Cup races at Daytona and Talladega, was raised at Williams #176 in Cornelius in 2012.

Add to that list a North Carolina lodge member, Joey Knuckles, who in 2022 will enjoy his 25th year as a member of Charlotte's West Gate #738.

The more impressive milestone is one he has reached this year. Knuckles, 59, has been hands-on involved in NASCAR for half a century.

That's right, Knuckles started working on racecars at age 9 through friends Clint, Stoney and Danny Ballard, whose father, Walter, raced on a shoestring in NASCAR's top division.

"One day I was playing with model cars," Knuckles said, "and the next day I'm working on the real thing."

Walter Ballard, who had only one full-time employee, ferried his racecar to tracks around the country on the back of a ramp truck.

His wife followed in their motorhome with the four boys, who were soon dubbed the "Peach Fuzz Gang." Together, they helped Ballard win the 1971 NASCAR Rookie of the Year award.

At age 16, Knuckles was selected the circuit's Mechanic of the Year, and in 1980, he got to visit Victory Lane for the first time as a crewman when future NASCAR Hall of Famer Terry Labonte won the Southern 500.

In addition to mechanical specialties such as building transmissions



Joey Knuckles is a proud member of West Gate #738. He hopes to make time to go through the officer line in a couple of years.

and rear ends, Knuckles became a top-flight tire changer, bounding over the pit-road wall to remove old tires and bolt on new rubber.

He later served as crew chief for Hall of Fame drivers Cale Yarborough, Davey Allison and Buddy Baker.

It was while working for Yarborough's team that Knuckles got his first close look at the Masonic fraternity.

A member of Metrolina Shrine Club asked if he could bring players from the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas football game to Yarborough's shop for a tour, and Knuckles set up the visit.

"These big guys came in and didn't really understand anything," Knuckles said. "Then we took them

back in the engine room to see a 'power run' on the dyno (the dynamometer measures engine performance), and we shut the lights off. They see the (exhaust) header pipes go from blue to orange to red and the roof shaking – they just thought that was the coolest thing in the world."

The larger impression that was made on Knuckles was by the Masons/Shriners who chaperoned the players.

"They were just giving people," he said.

"A lot of people come through a race shop and want to take pictures and stuff, but these guys were all about the kids. One of them told me, 'Joey, this is our next generation of Masons. What we're doing for

them, this is all about our future.'

"I said, 'Man, I'd really like to be a part of that.'"

Knuckles, who lives in Denver, was raised at West Gate in July 1997, and shortly thereafter joined Metrolina Shrine Club, which is located next door to the lodge on NC 16.

The hours required of a NASCAR crewman leave little time for lodge and Shrine club involvement, but Knuckles said he's always done his best to pitch in with their fundraisers.

He has a strong desire to be much more involved when his daughter, who's 13, completes her schooling.

When that time comes, he expects to devote more time to coaching lodge brothers on their catechisms.

Many of the lodge's members, he said, are in their late 60s and 70s, but added that his 19-year-old son is part of a group of about 10 young men who plan to petition in the near future.

"They've all asked. They come and help us on the chicken fries we have, and they come and help us clean after weddings at the Shrine Club. Just some kids that have stayed good, y'know?" he said.

"Being around the Masons and Shriners has helped them grow up. They're all 'yes, sir' and 'no, ma'am' and 'what can I do to help?' – stuff that you don't see out of a lot of kids today."

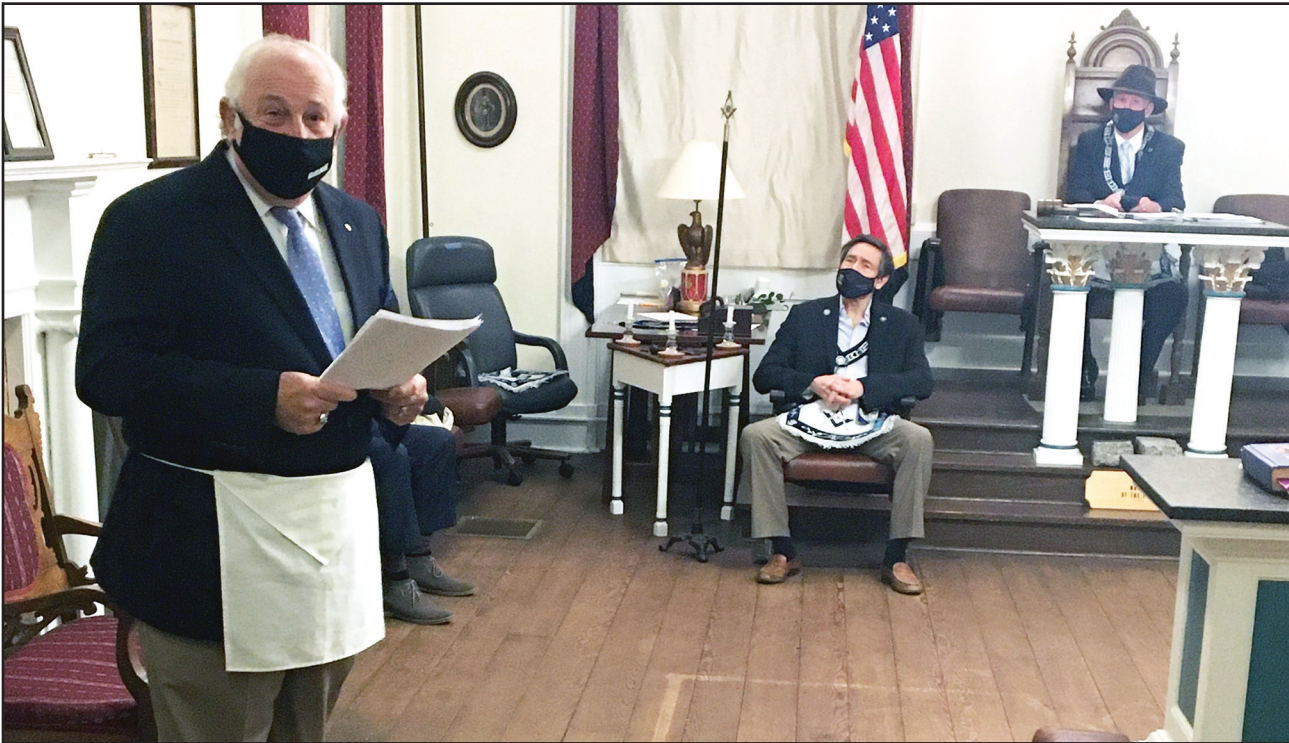
He said his desire to "go through the chairs in a couple of years" is something that's "been calling me."

He hopes he can earn the right to serve as Worshipful Master of West Gate.

How much longer he'll remain involved in racing remains to be seen, but he'll always have a stellar NASCAR career to reflect upon.

"I won seven Daytona 500s," he said. "I'm not a has-been or a never-was." ♠

NEWS OF THE CRAFT



▲ **OXFORD** – Alvin Billings, past master of Bula #409 and immediate Past Potentate of Amran Shriners, is the new annual giving officer at the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford. A Master Mason for 11 years, he also is a past District (22) Deputy Grand Master, a member of Scottish Rite, KCCH, and York Rite. “My position was created to promote recurring (monthly) giving as well as annual giving,” he says. “The idea is to increase recurring giving to allow our Home to operate on these gifts which would keep it from dipping into our savings. If every Mason in NC would contribute \$10 or more per month, we could wean ourselves from this dependency.” Alvin, seen here presenting at Eagle #19, is available and eager for invitations to speak at lodges to share MHCO’s story and the latest news from the home. To contact Alvin, call him at 336-260-3483 or email abillings@mhc-oxford.org.



▲ **OXFORD** – The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford was proud to celebrate Tycianna’s graduation from JF Webb High School in January. (Editor’s Note: Children at the home are identified only by first name to protect privacy.) Not only did Tycianna graduate mid-year, but she also earned straight As during the final semester, for the first time in her academic career. While Tycianna got to walk across the stage outside to receive her diploma, guest numbers were limited due to COVID restrictions. She was able to do a drive-through celebration and receive gifts, cards, cheers, and congratulations from all the kids and staff. Tycianna has advanced to the Independent Living Program and is working on her CNA Certification through Vance Granville Community College.



▲ **KERNERSVILLE** – Master Matthew Smith (left) of Kernersville #669 in March presents the Chaplain of Distinction award to Past Master Neal Nelson for his years of service as the Chaplain of Kernersville Lodge. Nelson has been chaplain for six years.

▼ **OXFORD** – He did it all for the love of Audrey. Brother James R. “Russ” Jones (center) recently traveled with his friend WB Danny Davis (right), both of St. John’s #4, to the Masonic Home for Children to deliver a very special gift. Brother Jones was honoring his late wife, Audrey W. Jones, who passed last year. When Mrs. Jones was diagnosed with a terminal illness, the couple sat down and talked about gifts she wanted to leave. They chose five organizations – all dedicated to helping children – to receive gifts in her name. MHCO was one of the recipients, along with the Shriner’s Hospital for Children, Operation Smile, St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital and Covenant House. Brother Jones made the trip from his home in Snow Hill in January to make the gift in person to Administrator Kevin Otis (left).



RALEIGH – The Grand Lodge has made a welcome change in the Masonic Ceremonies book. In response to requests from brethren, the book has been updated for 2021 in a new size that fits the inside of our suitcoat pocket perfectly. It’s also spiral bound and the text is larger. To buy your copy, call the Grand Lodge at 919-787-2021. You can charge it to your credit card. Or send a check to the Grand Lodge at 2921 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, NC 27608. Books will ship from the Grand Lodge.



▲ **GREENSBORO** – WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community reported in March that 100 percent of its residents had been vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. “I have been waiting a long time to write those words and I am grateful to everyone, including our residents, who made it possible,” Administrator Mark Lewis said in a letter to the community. WhiteStone has set up a vaccine maintenance program through the onsite pharmacy that will continue to vaccinate new residents and employees as they join our community. WhiteStone reopened to masked, socially distanced visits with family in mid-March – reuniting residents with family they had not seen in person for almost a year. At presstime, there were no active COVID-19 cases at the home. Meanwhile, progress continues to be made on the campus expansion and renovation project in the health center.

OXFORD – Do you know a family in need of help? During these challenging times families have experienced health, domestic and financial hardships that create a need for a safe haven for their children. If you know a family in need, please contact the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford or consider connecting MHCO to your church, council of ministers, social service programs, or other groups who might know of families MHCO can help. MHCO staff can talk by phone, provide Zoom presentations, and even visit groups to share information and answer questions. Groups that might be interested should visit www.mhc-oxford.org and watch the Keep the Promise! video to see the impact on a child’s life. Contact Administrator Kevin Otis at kotis@mhc-oxford.org or call 919-603-3938.

THE PRAYER CORNER

*By the Rev. Mark M. Vickers
Past Grand Chaplain*

As a United Methodist pastor, one who loves the scriptures both Old and New Testaments, I don’t think that Psalm 133 has ever meant more to me than on Tuesday, Feb. 2, when I stepped foot back into my home lodge’s Blue Lodge Room.

As we socially distanced, took temperatures, recorded names for contact tracing, and elbow bumped each other, those opening words of the Psalm came racing back into my mind, “*How very good and pleasant it is when brethren live together in unity.*”

I know that this text is expanded on throughout our Masonic work, but for that simple moment in time, I genuinely felt the “good and pleasant” of being back with my brothers!

As I entered the lodge room, I was firmly reminded that I had just presented a 50-year pin to a Brother Mason who I knew would never set foot inside a lodge on this celestial earth again.

This, in fact, took me to another level. I had greeted that brother, dined with that brother, and had served in the chairs with this brother and I realized he would never have that earthly feeling of “good and pleasant” here on earth again.

Brethren, I come to you in this edition, moving toward the mid-way of the year, asking you to care for one another! We have long been away from our fellow brethren and now we are coming back, slow as it is, we are coming back.

Take special note of what it means to enjoy and relish in the fact that the Grand Architect of the Universe has made it known “how good and pleasant it is” when we gather together and share in that bond of brotherhood.

Be mindful of those who will struggle to get back to lodge, reach out safely to them and let them know that the lodge is there for them. Do the same for your widows, let them know the lodge has not forgotten them and they are vital to our existence.

Again brethren, be safe, in order that Psalm 133 doesn’t need to be so “earth shattering” as it was for me on Feb. 2. May we take great pleasure in being in “good and pleasant unity together” for the remainder of our life on this celestial ball.

PRAYER: Grand Architect of the Universe, sustain us with health, wisdom, and compassion as we move throughout Masonry. May we be conscious of those around us, caring for them, in order that we may live and love and find our being in the unity and bond of brotherhood. SMIB AMEN.

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Be the first in your lodge to get all the latest Mason news! And don’t forget to be a part of the news: we invite your stories and photos via our dedicated email address: ncmason@glnc.us.

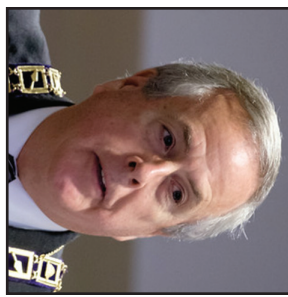
Again, thanks for reading the Mason!

WELCOME OUR NEW BROTHERS

Reagan, Jack Devereaux	8	Phoenix
Anthony, Christopher Hugh	27	Statesville
Falco, Paul Joseph	40	Hiram
Mull Jr, James Blair	85	Morning Star
Stanford, Brian Dylan	118	Mt. Hermon
Guffey, Stacy J.	145	Junaluskee
Jones, Brandon Lee	145	Junaluskee
Landers, Mark Edward	202	Cleveland
Thornton, Anthony Scott	206	Mingo
Brauman, Steven Richard	218	William G. Hill
DiBenedetto, Peter William	218	William G. Hill
Wollersheim, Mason Lee	218	William G. Hill
Arrington Jr, Howard Parker	231	William T. Bain
Gilliam, James Michael	271	Tabasco

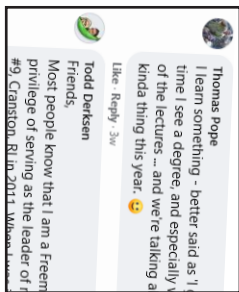
Luck, Mark Alan	271	Tabasco
Grady, Kenneth Allen	304	Pleasant Hill
Wright, William Grainger	319	Wilmington
Mink, Richard Dean	359	Mount Vernon
Henson, William Blake	381	Forest City
Hastings, Todd Loren	391	Lebanon
Amerson, Phillip J.	391	Lebanon
Nelson, Kevin Andrew	391	Lebanon
Condy, Daniel Iver	403	Siler City
Nobel, Nathaniel Robert	479	Rainbow
Wise, Charles Gregory	491	Hominy
Carney, Christopher Shawn	496	Mooreville
Saulnier, Daniel Henry	496	Mooreville
Sawyer, Thomas Brett	496	Mooreville

Revels III, John Wesley	501	Red Springs
Yelton, William Lance	535	Hollis
Huber, Grant Andrew	562	Waxhaw
Worley, Daniel Scott	562	Waxhaw
Lawson, Charles Richard	576	Andrew Jackson
Yount, Robert James	576	Andrew Jackson
Davis, Raymond Leo	626	Cannon Memorial
McKee, Justin P.	626	Cannon Memorial
Smith, Zachary Douglas	699	Asheboro
Canter, Dalton Scott	735	James B. Green
Rhodes, James Dylan	739	Newell
Stefanescu, Sebastian Constantin	739	Newell
Carter, Randall Scott	749	Truth
Fair, Eric Scott	756	Clifford Duell



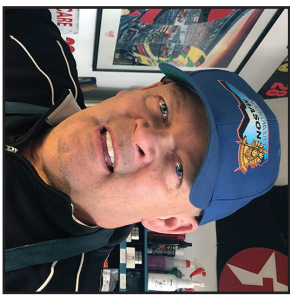
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Grand Secretary
announces retirement



page 4

Brothers respond to
Facebook question



page 9

From NASCAR
garage to the lodge
room

On the cover

The former Rockford #251 in Surry County has been brought back from history as the Rockford Preservation Society renovates. The lodge room will be restored as a museum. It is the oldest extant Masonic Lodge building in western NC.

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