



Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia  
Grand Council Cryptic Masons in Virginia

# The Keystone

**May 2020 Vol 4 No. 3**



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Companions:

As the Grand Scribe, it was an honor to be asked to write some thoughts for this edition of the Keystone. First, it is hoped that this finds you and your family well. Please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers.

We are living in an interesting time. Many are suffering due to illness or a loss of job. Most are experiencing a major change in the way that we normally go about our daily lives. For many, it is not easy. Change can be a difficult thing. Most of us love routine. Growing up, we had the opportunity to work in various machine shops. There were many men who did the same job for forty years. They followed the same routine for that entire time. When they retired, death came to them within a year. It seemed that they could not adjust to the change. It is hoped that you can cope with the change in a way that best enables you to continue growing and feeling good about life. In the movie "Heartbreak Ridge", with Clint Eastwood, he portrays a crusty sergeant at the end of his career. He teaches the soldiers under his charge that they must "Overcome and adapt". That is the way to live. That is the way to victory.

During the Civil War, on the last day of the Battle of Gettysburg, General Lee ordered General Pickett to launch what became known as "Pickett's Charge". It was the type of warfare that had seen its heyday. Despite council from his staff against that type of charge, he ordered it. As a result, many soldiers fell that day. The old-fashioned method of warfare would cease in the years to come.

Some might wonder what this has to do with the Royal Arch. In recent years, organizations have seen a dramatic decrease in membership. It does not simply affect the Royal

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Arch or Masonry in general. Social, service, and fraternal organizations around the country have been losing members. Many point to the new generation. This is a generation that works hard. Some work long hours as they try and raise families and put away college debt. By the time they are done working, the precious time that remains must be spent with family.

If you ask the average Companion about the problem with the Royal Arch or any other similar group, they will probably tell you that we need more members. They will tell you that the meetings don't have meaning for them. Some might even tell you that it is a "waste of time". We are not of that mind. The ritual and symbolism of the Arch is a thing of beauty. There is great pride in knowing that we are part of such an organization.

There is also the realization that what some believe might be true. What is there to draw someone to the Arch? One Companion had a pamphlet on the Arch and proudly told a group of Masons that "there is a lot of good information in the pamphlet". What was the information? What is it that drew that person into the Arch? Another told a group that if they wanted more "light" they needed to come to the Arch. As someone already a member of the Arch, their words had meaning. One might wonder if it had meaning for the potential members.

Years ago, we worked for a school superintendent who left an indelible mark when he said that we should "Plan our work and work our plan". There are great Chapters around the Commonwealth. They are active and vibrant. If you examine what they are doing well, it is that they are doing exactly

what was said. They plan their work and work their plan. They communicate well with one another. They have plans for their Chapters both in meetings and out. Many will tell you that showing up is half the battle. What is the point of showing up for a battle without the proper equipment needed? Those Chapters that simply come together for a meeting do not tend to be successful.

Does your Chapter have a committee which helps plan out the future of the chapter? Is the High Priest expected to provide all the programs? Once the High Priest is through with his year, does the next High Priest continue the efforts of his predecessor or is he left to do his "own thing"? The point is that many chapters do not plan out their work. Many Companions have little idea what to expect at a meeting much less the year. And, they probably would not be able to tell you what the goals of the Chapter are for the next year or five years or ten years.

Each year, we elect our officers. Many of the new High Priests will tell you what "they" would like to accomplish for the year. It is the Chapter that will do the work. It is the Chapter that will accomplish things together. Sometimes, the High Priest will ask the members what they would like to do. It would be my suggestion that this transpire outside of the Chapter meeting. Create an opportunity for interested Companions to come together and brainstorm ideas for the Chapter. Where does the Chapter want to be in five years? Create a plan for those goals to exist. Don't simply say, "Well, we want new members." Doesn't everyone? How will you accomplish that? Don't say, "We want to be

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better at ritual”. How will you accomplish that? What will be your measure of success? Imagine trying to build a house without plans. Once the goals are created, present them for support at the Chapter.

Making the meetings better is only one small part of what we need to be about. We need to be about new ideas. The statement, “If you always do what you’ve always done, then you’ll always get what you’ve always got” rings true. Many of us are attracted to the “normality” of the ritual. That is great. But, if we are content to live in the present, we are not doing anything for the future. Traditions are great. Sometimes, traditions should change. A good Brother of mine once said that he did not like the new electric light that lodges were using. He preferred the burning tapers because, as he pointed out, that was historically correct. Imagine if that logic were used in our everyday lives? We would be living in the Stone Age.

Each year, the Royal Arch does a remarkable job raising funds for the Alzheimer’s Foundation. Are there ways that we can build upon and improve what we did last year? Are there Companions who examine this, or do we simply do the same things we did before? This is not being critical. Technology is anything that we can use to make our lives better. The creators of the Smartphone are always asking and always evaluating ways in which their products can improve. We must evaluate what we are doing and where we are going. If schools did not evaluate students, they would not have any idea what they learned and what needs to be taught.

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Virginia must also examine what it is doing. Is there a written plan for the future of the Chapter? Do we know what we’d like to see next year or in ten years? We as a body should establish a comprehensive plan of action. What are our goals for the future? If we do not have them, the suggestion would be to create them. Those goals need to be broken down into objectives. They are the steppingstones by which we can obtain those goals. If we want new members, what are the steps we can take to address that objective?

The Royal Arch has many beautiful traditions. We need to hold on to them. We must also recognize that we are living in a quite different time from fifty years ago. Unless changes are made, it is possible that our traditions could be like those who speak Navajo. The Navajo language is dying because there is no one who wants to learn it. The young people have no interest in learning it because it has no meaning for them. Though it is part of their tradition, their lives are hugely different than their forefathers. Let us take the steps to ensure that never happens. We can attract the modern generation by showing them that we are moving forward in the 21st century. Our energy, our drive, our passion will attract them. That is not enough though. As important it is to show them where we have been, it is just as important to show them where we are going. They will be that future. Again, thank you very much for allowing me to share some thoughts with you. Be well. If we can do anything to help you or your chapter, please let me know.

Fraternally

*Mark Pennypacker, Grand Scribe*

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## The Grand Almoner's Message



Companions All:

Our Philanthropy Campaign as of this writing is at just over \$7,500.00. The early momentum of this Capitular year has had to pump the brakes with the spectre of the Coronavirus looming over us all the last two months. As Freemasons, we must continue to focus on the road beyond these tough times.

I have been in close contact with the Alzheimer's Association through the past two months and after navigating through all of the setbacks stemming from Covid-19, we have completed a Walk to End Alzheimer's information work sheet for each District to utilize that wishes to participate in a Walk in 2020. I have provided the Walk contact, Walk website, Walk location, the date, and the time of each event. I have distributed this information to your District Almoners and District Deputy Grand High Priests. From there, my hope is that you will work with them to found a team, either through the internet or by reaching out to the Walk contact directly, and begin planning on how you will support a Walk to End Alzheimer's for the remainder of the year.

I know and understand that these are difficult times on all of us, and that we may not be able to muster the financial support we have in the past few years, but that cannot curb our passion for helping those who are suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. We must find new ways to participate and to show our support. Alzheimer's Disease is not going away because we have another trial

to face in Covid-19. I believe in my heart that this pandemic will be over soon. We must not sit on our laurels. We must plan now for our future philanthropic success when the immediate challenge in front of us is over. I also realize that some of you have already forged teams and that you are already engaged in your plans for your local Walks. Thank you for your effort. Your dedication is sincerely appreciated. Your Grand Chapter is doing its part to make sure each District is equipped with the information needed to have a successful campaign with the Alzheimer's Association.

As Alzheimer's Association advocates, we are making a personal choice to use our collective resources to fight this disease and we will hopefully see a day soon that will lead to its first survivor. This is not a typical year as we are also fighting Covid-19 but remember that there is no limitation set on how you decide to raise funds. You may need to be inventive and imaginative. Every dollar we raise counts, and no one knows which one will lead to the cure.

If you have questions regarding your Walk to End Alzheimer's campaign, please contact me at (703) 928-8939 or [jake.trenary@ferguson.com](mailto:jake.trenary@ferguson.com). I will assist you in any way possible. Please be safe, stay at home, and take care of your families until we can meet again. Holiness to the Lord.

*Jason Curtis "Jake" Trenary, Grand Almoner*

## Correspondence Course Update

The following have recently completed the course: Joshua Jenkins, Mt. Vernon No. 14; Joshua William Payne and Charles Dunn Harmon, John Dove No. 21; Gary Wright and Tommy W. Steffey Sr., Castlewood No. 34;



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Alan Spear and Michael Ashley, Shenandoah No. 17; James Wilhelm, Murray No. 22; A. Scott Truax and Jonathan R. Lovins, Hiram No. 45; Kenneth L. McKinnis, Warren No. 5; and Ed Cohen, Fauquier No. 25.

## Another Remarkable Royal Arch Painting



In April, Right Excellent Mark Chapman of Keystone No. 58 finished the Most Excellent Master degree painting for their Chapter room (see picture on left). He has now started on the sixth (and last oil) painting of the Royal Arch Degree. When the six paintings are completed, prints of each will be sold to

raise funds for the Memory Care Unit at MAHOVA. The target completion date is October 2020, so look to buy them then.

## Look Sharp - Be Sharp, by Ed Tooma

Have you ever watched a drill team in action? Nothing looks better than watching precision moves. Everyone moving at the same time in unison looks mighty sharp. That's exactly how we as Companions should look when going through the ritual at our Chapter meetings. What I am seeing are a bunch of tired looking executions.

Why is it that everyone wants to speed up the movements and get ahead? Follow the leader and take it one step at a time, or by the numbers. Whatever works best. There is no reason whatsoever to rush things. Same goes with the verbal part. "Together brethren" means what it says - together.

Grouping in threes is another area that needs some smoothing, and it never fails during the rotation that some get out of sync. And remember to keep things at low breath. There is a formula for getting it right. I won't go into that for obvious reasons but have someone give a class to make things clear.

The same thing applies when the officers recite their respective duties. This should be done with the same precision as the movements and sound off so everyone can hear you. The back-and-forth dialogue needs to flow and sound meaningful, and not come across like you are just throwing away some words. Our ritual is so beautifully written - it serves the same delivery. And let's polish those due guards and always do them smartly. All these areas covered can be practiced until each element is done the right way. Plan a meeting for getting squared away. It'll make a world of difference.

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## Veteran Update

Congratulations to these Royal Arch veterans: Howard C. Chitwood, Marion No. 54, 70 years; Robert L. Tull Jr., Chincoteague No. 75, 50 years; and William E. Tyndall, Westmoreland No. 41, 50 years.

## Royal Arch Seminar Series – Have you attended yet?

Two months ago, as soon as the Covid-19 crisis began and meetings were suspended, the Grand Provost and Grand High Priest developed a plan to continue and enhance the Companion's Royal Arch education and knowledge. Since then, we have held four well-attended Zoom seminars, with an average of almost 50 Companions at each. The first seminar on April 9 explained the Correspondence Course, how to enroll, and reviewed various questions and answers. The last three have been on Royal Arch Geography (an explanation of the various places mentioned in Masonic and Royal Arch ritual), the Origin and Teachings of the Royal Arch Degrees, and the History of Grand Chapter. Our next one will be on Thursday, June 4, at 7 pm, where Right Excellent Jeff Hedges and Most Excellent Don McAndrews will present short vignettes on Royal Arch music. These seminars have been so successful that efforts are underway to continue them in the future even after we start to meet again.



**Brother James David Bentley**



**Receiving the Ish Sodi Award in 2018**

## James David Bentley – A Tribute by the Grand Provost

Every week or so my phone would ring, I would answer it, and hear that familiar and welcome drawl. Brother James David Bentley never failed to lift spirits with his optimism, enthusiasm, and love of Masonry and the Royal Craft. Just in the last month, inspired by the Royal Arch Geography seminar, he was researching various places and liked to call me about his discoveries. We also enjoyed talking at length about the Bible, its teachings, and its prophecies. On May 18, all of us lost a dear and wonderful Brother when the Lord called him home. Companion Bentley was a Past District Deputy Grand High Priest, winner of the Ish Sodi Award in 2018, Past High Priest, a strong advocate and builder of Barrett Chapter No. 76 and District 11, a member of the

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Education Committee, a Past Worshipful Master, and so much more. Our best wishes, thoughts, and prayers go to his widow Sondra and their family. We will miss you Brother!

## William Millican School Scheduled for June 29-30 Cancelled

Because of the Covid-19 crisis, the school is cancelled. We are sorry that this was necessary.

## Upcoming Calendar

June 4, Zoom Seminar on Royal Arch Music, 7 pm

June 18, Zoom Seminar on Royal Arch Signs and Symbolism, 7 pm (if still not meeting)

September 12, Alzheimer Walk, Chesapeake, 830 am

September 19, Alzheimer Walk, Blacksburg, 8 am

September 27, Alzheimer Walk, Reston, 11 am

## Latest Version of the Royal Arch Methodical Digest

As a result of recent seminar conversations, the 19<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Royal Arch Methodical Digest has been posted to our Grand Royal Arch website. Hardcopies are still available from the Grand Secretary for a small fee.



**Waynesboro Union No. 2 members present lunch checks to two local High Schools**

## Waynesboro Union Royal Arch Masons Support School Lunch Programs

Right Excellent Steve Young recently sent the following to local television and newspapers: “Hunger can prevent students from making the most of their classroom opportunities, and one in eight children in Virginia struggle with it. Five bills focusing on public school meal programs were introduced in the 2020 General Assembly. Our Masons believe support can be found closer to home, and that they can be part of the solution to this problem in our community. In March, Russell Snodgrass, Scott Fielding, Bill Wimmer, and Steve Young of Waynesboro Union No. 2 put that belief into action. On behalf of all the Chapter members, they paid off all the overdue lunch account balances at Stuarts Draft Elementary by presenting a check to Donna Puffenbarger,



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Cafeteria Manager. They then traveled to Wilson Elementary School and paid off all their overdue lunch account balances by presenting a check to Dawn Young, Principal, and Frieda Bisbee, Cafeteria Manager. ‘All our Masonic organizations believe in supporting those in need,’ said Most Excellent Snodgrass, ‘We contribute to nationally known charities such as Shriners Hospitals for Children, Alzheimer’s Research, and many others. We also have several state-wide and local scholarship programs for those in college or trade school’. Excellent Scott Fielding added ‘it is particularly rewarding when we can help in the local community, and especially when we can make a difference for children’. Ms. Bisbee and Ms. Puffenbarger agreed that Masons made a difference for local children.” Editor: What a remarkable idea! We commend Waynesboro Union No. 2 and recommend doing something like this for each community.

## The Influence of DeMolay on the Grand Chapter of Virginia

As mentioned in the May 21 seminar, DeMolay has played a major role lately in providing leadership to the Grand Chapter. Soon after DeMolay came to Virginia in 1922, Petersburg Union No. 7 saw its value and twice tried in the 1920s to start a Chapter. However, the Grand Royal Arch Chapter would not authorize it. Similarly, at the request of VPI DeMolays, Taylor No. 23 tried in 1929 to start a Chapter, were not authorized, and instead formed Blacksburg Commandery No. 32 as the DeMolay sponsor. In 1955, Waynesboro No. 71 became the first (and only) Virginia Royal Arch Chapter to sponsor DeMolay. By 1976, Thomas A. O’Halloran became the first Senior DeMolay to become Grand High Priest, followed by C. Frank Goodrich in 1985. Since the late 1990s, six Senior DeMolays have become Grand High Priest: E. Clifton Whitlock, 1998; Douglas L. Jordan, 1999; Jeffrey G. Burcham, 2001; Gordon H. Sprigg Jr., 2005; Paul S. Newhall, 2008, and the current Grand High Priest, Raymond D. Steele. Note that in 1998, there were four Senior DeMolays in Grand Line. In 1989, Douglas L. Jordan may have been the first Senior DeMolay to receive the John Dove Award, followed by Edwin Elliott Jr. in 2008, Rhey M. Solomon in 2014, Jeffrey G. Burcham in 2015, Gordon H. Sprigg Jr. in 2016, and Thomas L. Varner Jr. in 2017. The State Master Councilor has spoken to Grand Chapter since the early 1970s also, and the Grand High Priest has visited each Conclave for the past 50 years, which has also cemented relations.

## Let Your Work Become Your Mark

Do you own the greatest book ever written about the Mark Master Degree? When Most Excellent Stewart Miner was Grand High Priest in 1986, his theme was “Let Your Work Become Your Mark”, and he spent the year teaching the lessons of the Mark Master Degree. Near the end of his term, he condensed them into a book that was sold for \$5 each. The money was used to purchase the first Grand Chapter office computer. Now, over thirty years later, it is still available at the same price for a new generation of Royal Arch Masons to enjoy. It is an excellent source of information and the short talks are very suitable for Chapter meeting programs. The Grand Provost is selling the book at all Official Visits, with the proceeds going to the Alzheimer’s Memory Unit at the Masonic Home. If you would like a book, send a check payable to “Grand Royal Arch Chapter” to the Grand Provost, 14302 Boydton Plank Road, Dinwiddie, VA 23841.