



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

The Keystone

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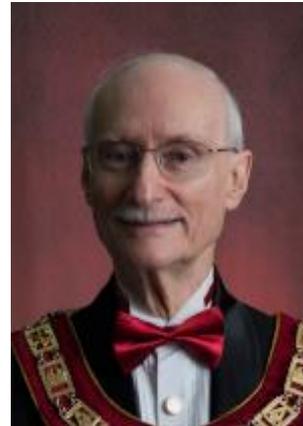
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The Grand High Priest's Message

In the March issue of the Keystone, I discussed the issue of membership which is critical to the continued health of our Chapter. This

time, I want to address our sixth goal for the year, making Royal Arch Masonry fun.

At first glance, this might seem like a strange goal, but it is an essential element because as important as is our ritual and our constant search for Masonic light, at its most basic, Freemasonry is all about the relationships we form and the friendships we make.

All too often we are focused on the superficialities of our Order rather on the obligations we take to each other. Indeed, I am sure in your Masonic experience you have seen examples of Brethren with big egos who like to be center stage, so while they are prepared to learn the ritual letter perfect, they are not prepared to practice in their daily lives or their interactions with others any of the principles they have articulated so well. And you know the old saying: "show me; don't tell me."

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I am sure you also have encountered Brethren who seem to be more concerned about accumulating titles and honors than in actually serving their Brethren or the Craft.

When I visit a Lodge or Chapter it doesn't take very long to get a feel for the ambience of the group. Some Lodges are very formal. The ritual is perfect, everyone is in order, and there is no talking out of turn, but there seems to be little joy in the room.

Some Lodges are informal with less than optimal attention to the East, and the kidding around has a somewhat hurtful edge to it. I would call this bad behavior.

And some Lodges are neither overly formal nor overly casual. The Brethren in these meetings take their Masonry seriously, but there is an easy camaraderie. You can feel the warmth, and you can see the smiles on their faces.

You also can tell by watching the social dynamics during the meeting and in the dining hall whether or not there is group cohesion, whether everyone seems to be enjoying each other's company, or if there are distinct cliques sitting together, with other Brethren sitting alone.

I don't want to generalize, but in most Royal Arch Chapters, the dynamic is on the correct side of the equation.

And at our Grand Convocations, we have that unique tradition of the Committee of the whole, where every Companion in attendance is free to speak and vote. This encourages participation and engagement, and is a good thing.

All that said, how do we ensure that our meetings are fun? Well, first of all they need to be worthwhile. Coming to the meeting location is an investment in time, effort, and money. It is a tradeoff because most of us

have many competing demands on our time. Thus, it is important that coming to a meeting is value added. One way is to ensure this is to have a good speaker and a good program. It is sad when your wife, or colleague, or another Brother says: "I know you went to a Masonic meeting last night, what happened?" And you respond, "nothing really." You don't say this because you are afraid to give away some Masonic secret, but because nothing very memorable happened.

But suppose there had been a good presentation and you learned something you didn't know before. You would be more enthusiastic about talking about the meeting you attended, and I think you might want to share some of the new information and ideas you learned. Remember, a fun meeting is interesting.

Another piece of what makes Royal Arch fun, is the fellowship. Thus, the social time before and after the meeting, whether at dinner or in a Zoom-like setting is equally important for building relationships and developing friendships.

Being able to engage with your Companions, share experiences, get sympathy and encouragement when needed, and congratulations, when those are in order, is very meaningful.

A lot of this revolves around leadership and mentorship. I know some people who, when they enter a room seem to suck all the oxygen out, and you can't wait until they leave. And there are others who spread sunshine wherever they go. You really enjoy being with them.

We all have a choice as to which column we will fit and how our Companions will regard us.

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Too often, Masonic courtesy has consisted of a Brother perfunctorily shaking your hand, while looking toward the next person, rather than focusing on you, even for a second. Too often, when you are asked: “how are you doing,” and you start to respond, you realize this was a salutation not a question and your response is neither required nor desired. Rather deflating, don’t you think?

You know, the best conversationalists don’t say very much. They ask about you, and they actually care. You feel comfortable sharing confidences, and talking about things that are important to you.

In this regard, I have noted that all too often I had a tendency when asked for advice or help to spend very little time listening and to immediately propose the solution. Instead of listening, I did most of the talking. But I have learned that rather than rushing in with a solution, what I needed to do is adopt a position of empathetic listening.

It can be therapeutic for the person with a problem to be able to articulate his feelings and concerns and even talk his way through an issue with someone sympathetically listening.

In addition to effective listening, before we offer suggestions, we need to fully understand the issue – and try to understand it from the perspective of the person having the problem. It is helpful to be non-judgmental, and it is useful to cultivate a sense of humility which recognizes that given similar circumstances and similar temptations, we, too, might have found ourselves in similar difficulties.

Only after we have listened and feel confident we really understand the issues and concerns, should we try to help our Brother

to better frame the problem and help him to craft a way forward.

Becoming this kind of a Companion makes you a leader and a mentor; more important, it makes you a friend.

And having this kind of a Companion in the Chapter makes it fun to come to meetings, because these are the men you want to associate with, the men you respect and trust, and want in your life.

Another part of what makes Royal Arch fun is the social and family events. I know that we are a men’s organization, but we also have families, spouses, children, grandchildren, and others. And nothing brings us together more than events in which we don’t need to leave our family behind, but can have them be part of our Masonic engagement.

When our current COVID restrictions are lifted, having dinners, going to a concert or the theater, or to sporting events, is a great way to bring everyone together in a social setting. The particular venue is not as important as the opportunity to be together. It is during these times that we learn about each other and grow closer. I would hasten to add that inviting our widows to these events should be a high priority.

So I suggest to you that if we increase our opportunities for fellowship both within the context of our meetings and in other social settings, and if we make our meetings interesting and meaningful, we can make Royal Arch an important and fun part of our Companions lives.

But while it is important for the High Priest and his officers to do more to maintain contact with the Companions, we each have a personal role to play.

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Masonry is a support system, but too many of us are shy about reaching out for help, even though we are appreciative when it is offered. So here are some things we might consider doing. We could:

- Call a Masonic widow we haven't spoken to in some time and check how she is doing – and perhaps take her to lunch.
- Call a sick Brother who could use some cheering up and some company.
- Call a Brother we have not seen in some time so we can update each other on what has happened since we last spoke.
- Offer to drive an older Mason to a meeting.
- Give blood – it really is needed and doesn't cost a cent.
- Pick one Masonic charity and send a check.

In both good times and bad our Brotherhood is, in effect, a second family. And a little of our time, a bit of kindness, some empathy and concern, goes a long way to making someone's day just a little bit brighter.

One final comment, and this is directed to the District Deputy Grand High Priest. When you attend a Chapter meeting, whether in person, on Zoom or both, you should try to adopt an analytic perspective and view the meetings objectively and dispassionately. Ask yourself whether the Companions are enjoying themselves or are they bored and wishing the meeting was over. If something seems to be lacking, work with the High Priest to find ways to make the meetings more interesting, more enlightening, and, yes, more fun.
Fraternally, Ed Cohen



The Grand Scribe's Message:

The Grand High Priest has asked me to submit a brief article for this edition of *The Keystone*. First let me give you a short Masonic biography of myself. I was born and raised in Covington, VA. My father was a Royal Arch Mason and a member of the former Covington Royal Arch Chapter No. 18 which merged into Alleghany Royal Arch Chapter No. 24 several years ago. I was exalted on February 2, 1989 in Murray Royal Arch Chapter No. 22 in Roanoke, where I have served as High Priest in 1996, and District Deputy Grand High Priest in 1998. For the last 36 years I have been working in the funeral industry as a Licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer having first started with Diuguid Funeral Service in Lynchburg, VA, and now working as a Manager at the East Chapel of Oakey's Funeral Service in Roanoke.

I would next like to talk to you about membership. One thing all of us see is that changes are affecting our society, and that includes all organizations, both fraternal and civic. We have to accept these changes to remain vibrant. Do you remember the presentations given by your High Priests, District Deputy Grand High Priests and Grand High Priests in the past? All of them usually mentioned a need to increase the membership in the Royal Arch Chapters. To accomplish this we need to offer something

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to attract the Brethren in the Masonic Lodges who are not members. Most Excellent McAndrews put together a video several years ago that can be shown to the perspective Brethren in your Lodge to encourage them to petition the Chapter. One thing that he mentions in his presentation is being told by Brethren being asked to join Royal Arch of their concern that this would result in yet another night away from their family.

When I first became a member of the Royal Arch, the only way the Chapters in the Roanoke area were obtaining new members was by asking the newly raised Master Masons to petition the Royal Arch. There were no programs about Royal Arch being given in the Lodges and no literature to take home from the Lodge to read about the Royal Arch. Today we have programs for both the Royal Arch Chapters and the Masonic Lodges, literature in the Lodges for the Brethren to read, and opportunities to participate in Alzheimer's walks. We offer dinners prior to our Stated Convocations and are able to offer to prepare meals for the Brethren in the Lodges prior to a Royal Arch program to be given. These are only a few of the ways we can promote the Royal Arch.

If we offer something of interest to both the prospective candidate and his family, there will be a better chance that the Brother will want to become a member of the Royal Arch. All Royal Arch Chapters have the same ritual, however we have to remember that each Royal Arch Chapter is different in what it can offer perspective members. The Companions of each Chapter need to put their

thoughts together to ensure that they are offering meetings and events that are worth the time of the new Companion. Different approaches may work in different Chapters and, if what you are doing works, let us know so we can share it with all of our Royal Arch Chapters.

I am sure there are many Royal Arch Chapters doing similar activities and more to attract new members throughout the State of Virginia and we must keep up the good work. We must educate ourselves on Royal Arch Masonry so we will be prepared to answer questions and continue to educate the Brethren of our Lodges about the Royal Arch in order to survive. If we all work together we can accomplish this task and increase our membership. Never give up!



The Grand Almoner's Message

Companions – COVID is still with us and it looks like it will be for some time. I have gotten both of my shots and had no side effects. My Lady, daughter and son have also received their vaccines and only had mild side effects from the second dose. I cannot tell you to go get the shots, but based upon my experience, I recommend it. I choose to look forward with a positive attitude and do not look at the “dark” side presented by the major news outlets. A positive attitude goes a long way in making life better for all.

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The Alzheimer's Executive Council is planning for the Alzheimer's Walks to be "in-person" this fall. I am sure that there will be some restrictions and that the registration tables may have lines, but nothing that should cause us concern. Check with your local Alzheimer's folks and see if they have chosen a date for the walk, yet. I will publish the "Walk" dates as soon as I get them. For those Chapters/Districts that do not want to wait to hold a "Walk" in the fall, feel free to hold a "virtual" walk at a time of your choosing.

With that though in mind, I have been working with my Chapter, Guardians, of the Widows Sons Masonic Riders Association to pull together a "Poker Run" to benefit both Alzheimer's and the MAHOVA Memory Unit. Warm weather is required for these events. I will keep the Companions up to date on the progress made. The big fund raising from these events comes from the silent auction of items held at the end of the run. The date we have chosen for the Poker Run is 29 AUG. We are already receiving donated items for the raffles. The final stop will be at Tobaccology in Hay Market, right behind the Hay Market Lodge No.313. There will be excellent food provided. Details in an upcoming article. This Poker Run will be open to "ALL" who want to support the work to find a cure for Alzheimer's.

Also, remember that any funds donated by a Companion, Chapter or District count towards our giving. If one responds to a solicitation made by mail, phone, email, etc.

record the amount and report it to your District Almoner. If you do not have a District Almoner or know who it is, let me know. Be sure to include your name, Chapter, District and whether it was for Alzheimer's or Alzheimer's Research.

Fraternally,

Rt. Ex. Chuck Trude PM, PHP
Grand Almoner
540-229-4043 / trudecr@comcast.net

Calendar

There are many Alzheimer's Walks scheduled in September, October and November. For a full listing, go to <https://virginiaroyalarch.org/walk/>

The Grand Convocation is scheduled for November 19-20, 2021. More information to be posted.

Allied Masonic Degrees will be hosting Masonic Week February 9-13, 2022 in Arlington, VA

New 50-Year Pin Recipients:

Mt. Ex. Philip Thiem, PGHP, Norfolk
United No. 1, 03/15/71

Ex. I. John Gearey, PHP, Norfolk United
No. 1, 06/03/71

Ronald G. McManus, Sr., Hiram No. 45
07/16/71

Michael E. McGee, Chincoteague No. 75
04/06/71

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Correspondence Leadership Course Completions:

Cameron C. Caffé - D.C. Shanks No. 31, District No. 8 (Completed August 2020)
Edward E. Wilkinson, Jr. - Arlington No. 35, District No. 1 (Completed 4-7-2021)
Shelton S. Mackey III - Fredericksburg No. 23, District No. 19 (Completed 5-5-2021)
Ex. Roderick L. Cutright - Westmorland No. 41, District No. 19 (Completed 5-5-2021)
MW Bernard Dungan - Westmorland No. 41, District No. 19 (Completed 5-5-2021)
Ex. Edward S. Ransone III - Westmorland No. 41, District No. 19 (Completed 5-5-2021)
Rt. Ex. Ronald T. Saunders - Westmorland No. 41, District No. 19 (Completed 5-5-2021)
Billy Joe Hale - Marion No. 54, District No. 10 (Completed 8/9/2020)
Huey Allen – Fredericksburg No. 23, District No. 19 (Completed 8/28/2020)

A Special Presentation

On Thursday, April 22, 2021, Barrett Royal Arch Chapter #76 in Clintwood, VA had its Stated Convocation. In attendance were Most Excellent Charles Cave, Past Grand High Priest of Royal Arch Masons in Virginia in 2010; Rt. Ex. Hafford Lee Arritt, Jr., current Grand Scribe; Rt. Ex. Farris Fleming, PDDGHP; Ex. Marshal Hughes (Treasurer); Companions Roger Elkins (King) and John Wilmot (Principal Sojourner). Those attending via Zoom were Rt. Ex. James P. Nunn, current Grand Principal Sojourner; Companion Joseph Boyd, and Rt. Ex. Michael Deel, DDGHP for the 11th Capitular District. The highlight of the evening was when Mt. Ex. Cave presented a gavel, which he handmade, to Rt. Ex. Arritt. The Companions pictured below are (left to right in the front): Rt. Ex. Farris Fleming, Most Excellent Charles Cave and Rt. Ex. Hafford Arritt. Back row, left to right, Companion Roger Elkins and Ex. Marshal Hughes.



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Norfolk United News:

After fourteen months, almost to the day, Norfolk United Royal Arch Chapter No. 1 conferred the Mark Master & Past Master degrees on six candidates. Talk about fun? It was such an enjoyable evening and our degree teams performed better than expected after being idle so long. Having our Grand Lecturer working with us made it even better.

Three candidates were ours and three were advanced as a courtesy to Great Bridge Royal Arch Chapter No. 82. We had 13 members and 4 visitors “on the job” tonight; and, I say again, we had fun and look forward to many more Work nights. After all, bringing good men to Royal Arch Light is our reason for existence.

Frederick Russel Dixon, Sec’y
Norfolk United Royal Arch Chapter No. 1

Annandale Chapter In-Person May Meeting at Elmer Timberman Lodge:



Attending were Companions Brennan, Himsey, Terrill, Lotz, Kasey, Landerkin, Rench, Capuno, Bullach, Maylum, Gilbert, Woodrow and DDGHP Rocha.

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Arlington Chapter In-Person May Meeting at Cherrydale Lodge



Attending were Companions Landerkin, Moreno, Capuno, Bullach, Brennan, Rench, Potts, Kasey, Wilkinson, Rhodes, Rice, Woodrow, Vellenga and DDGHP Rocha.

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Presentation of Leadership Correspondence Course Certificate



District Education Officer for District 1 Ex. Companion James C. Landerkin presents the Leadership Correspondence Course Certificate to Companion Edward Wilkinson during the Arlington Chapter Meeting.