



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

# The Keystone

June 2024 Vol. 8 No. 2



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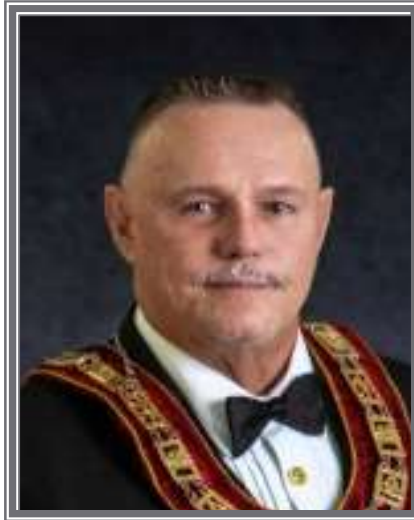
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[thevakeystone@gmail.com](mailto:thevakeystone@gmail.com).

## GRAND HIGH PRIEST/ MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

### Ho Companions!

Where has the time gone? It seemed like it was only yesterday we were at the Grand Convocation and now half the year is gone. I have already made half of the sixteen Official Visits and several other visits both in-state and out-of-state. I want to thank all the District Deputy Grand High Priests, their Ladies, all the Companions for their hospitality and fellowship at these visits. The Donations to our charities are doing well so far this year and I know we can raise a lot more in the coming months.

I would like to extend a great big thank you to Right Excellent James Paul Nunn, our Grand King, for covering for me on the Official Visits to Districts 3 and 19 while I was under the weather and could not travel.



I want to thank all the Chapters that are conferring the Degrees and exalting new Royal Arch Masons. Remember to include these new Companions in the Chapter meetings and degree work so they will stay interested and keep coming back.

Companions, by the time you receive this article we will have had the William B. Millican Royal Arch School which will be held on June 14, and 15 at Taylor Lodge in Salem. With the Committee on Work on the evening of June 13th. If you did not get an opportunity to attend this year please try to attend next year. Right Excellent Randy Johnson our Grand Lecturer and Associate Grand Lecturer Most Excellent Russ Snodgrass are excellent instructors.

I want to ask each of you to remember the Companions that have not been attending the Chapter meetings in a while, give them a call to see if they may need a ride as we are getting older some may not be able to drive at night. Some may just need a gentle reminder to start attending the Chapter again.

Remember to continue the Lodge programs on Royal Arch Masonry and red coat nights so we can solicit new members.

Sincerely and Fraternaly

M.E./M.I. William R. Owens

Grand High Priest / Grand Master

# The Virginia Keystone Newsletter – March 2024

## GRAND KING'S MESSAGE

### Ho Companions!

We are exactly halfway through the Capitular year, and I hope all of you are having as good a time as I am! I had the pleasure of attending the Official Visit of the Grand High Priest for both Districts 8 and 9 this past weekend, and the turnout fills me with hope for the state of the Craft. Rt. Ex. Joey Martin will be reporting on the official visit of Mt. Ex.



Owens to District 8 later in this edition of the Keystone.

Lady Rebecca and I had a wonderful time at the District 9 Official visit with all our old friends at Taylor Chapter. As this is my home district and being Grand King, this meeting was doubly special for me. Of special note, I



District 9 Official Visit. Front Row, Brandon Hale, Dan H. Surface, Mt. Ex. William Randall Owens, Bobby Faulker, Joe G. Broce, Elmer Mottesheard, Owen T. Wade, James Nunn. Back Row: Michael C. VanDyke, R. Bruce Wachob, Darrell Maxwell, Dakota Burton, Robert E. Lucas, John W. Eanes, Russell G. Snodgrass, Edwin E. Pruett, and James A. Fields, Jr.

would like to thank Rt. Ex Companion Bobby Faulker for attending this visit.

Companion Faulkner, having moved to the New River Valley in recent years, is a life member of Carolina Chapter No. 1 located in Charleston, SC, and when his health permits, attends chapter regularly to share his 52 years of experience in the quarries of Royal Arch Masonry! In addition to Companion Faulker, we had Rt. Ex John Eanes and Bruce Wachob in attendance who are both 50+ year members of Royal Arch Masonry. Companions, I ask you to dwell on this for a few minutes in your spare time...In those three men, there are a combined 150+ years of Royal Arch Masonry!

Companions, as I close this correspondence to you all, I would ask that we all maintain the momentum in the Grand Chapter. We have a strong Grand

Line of elected officers that stand ready to assist you simply by asking. I would sincerely request that each chapter consider nominating one of your deserving members for the John Dove Meritorious Service Medal. These recommendations can be submitted by individual members, several like-minded members, as the consensus of the chapter, or district. Additionally, don't forget to make plans to attend our Grand Annual Convocation this November 20-24. Details for registration and hotel reservations are below.

Fraternally,

James P. Nunn

Grand King



GRAND HIGH PRIEST  
WILLIAM RANDALL OWENS  
"BE THE LIGHT"



# Save The Date

## GRAND ANNUAL CONVOCATION ROYAL ARCH MASONS IN VIRGINIA

November 20-24, 2024  
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel  
Williamsburg, VA

The Grand High Priest Banquet  
will be held Friday evening.

The Ladies Banquet will be held  
Saturday evening.

Reservations may be made by calling:  
800-222-8733, group code RAM  
or online  
<https://group.doubletree.com/2ii94c>

## GRAND PROVOST AND GRAND COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SERVICE MESSAGE

### My Dear Companions,

I hope this finds you and yours safe and well. It is an honor and a pleasure to be serving you as Grand Provost and Chairman of the Grand Chapter and Grand Council Committee on Education and Service this Capitular and Cryptic Year. Our Most Excellent Grand High Priest/Most Illustrious Grand Master William Randall Owens has provided his plan and we are busy at work!

I invite you to reach out to me with your thoughts and ideas. It is together, invested, will we strengthen our Chapters and Councils. I remind you that the Subordinate Chapter and Council Officer Training Manual, which provides many needed tools, can be found on our website under the “Forms and Information” page (further under Miscellaneous [Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia - Forms \(virginiaroyalarch.org\)](http://virginiaroyalarch.org) as well as on the Education page (in the block at the bottom below the Educational Programs and Materials).

We continue working to increase the listing of resource materials on the website: [Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia - Education \(virginiaroyalarch.org\)](http://virginiaroyalarch.org) of the programs have been used by Companions both in and out of this Grand Jurisdiction to provide light in their Chapters and Councils. Please do reach me with programs you have developed or are aware of or links to sites that you feel would be a good resource to share. The online Correspondence Courses have been launched! You can now enjoy the opportunity to take the courses individually or as a group and allows you to complete them at your leisure, wherever you may choose to do so as long as you have an internet connection. The course itself has been updated; the course registration form and lessons are located at [Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia - Education \(virginiaroyalarch.org\)](http://virginiaroyalarch.org).

Your Committee on Education and Service continues to strive to bring you

news and helpful information via The Keystone Newsletter publication. It always makes for a better publication when Companions provide input to allow us to share what is going on in the rest of the jurisdiction. We encourage you to provide input as often as possible.

Please submit entries to [thevakeystone@gmail.com](mailto:thevakeystone@gmail.com).

The Grand Chapter & Grand Council Committee on Education and Service continues to provide opportunities for our collective improvement and enlightenment, through virtual educational presentations. We hope you will join us! Sessions will be held on the

Zoom platform on the following dates and times:

- 22 June 2024 from 10:00 to 11:00 am EDT

- 28 September 2024 from 10:00 to 11:00 am EDT

Join the Zoom Meetings at:

[Launch Meeting - Zoom](#) Please remember to reach me at any time with questions, concerns, or ways to improve.

Sincerely and fraternally yours in friendship and service,

Raymon W. Bacchus

Grand Provost



## **LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE COURSE COMPLETIONS**

The following Companions have recently completed Royal Arch correspondence courses. The Education Chair applauds your efforts and your successful completion.

Companion Tristan Z. Delara of Great Bridge No. 82 successfully completed the Correspondence course on 1 January 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Ronald F. Strum of Orange of No. 47 successfully completed the Correspondence Course on 20 January 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Ronald F. Strum of Orange of No. 47 successfully completed the Correspondence Course on 15 February 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Matthew D. Critchley of Richmond Washington No. 3-9 successfully completed the correspondence course as of 3 March 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Robert S. Swanson of Potomac No. 88 successfully completed the correspondence course as of 9 March 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Reuben V. Martinez of Potomac No. 88 successfully completed the correspondence course as of 11 March 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Andrew O. Marotta of Potomac No. 88 successfully completed the correspondence course as of 13 March 2024. Congratulations!

Companion Joseph M. Matthews of E.H. Gill No. 50 successfully completed the correspondence course as of 1 April 2024. Congratulations!

## CHAPTER / COUNCIL NEWS

### Capitular District No. 8

We had close to 50 people including wives who thanks to Lady Aimee Martin and Lady Donna Arritt they had paint night activities while the companions attended a tiled meeting with the Grand High Priest.

Ex Comp R. H. McCoy, Jr., Secretary, Norfolk United No. 1

Editor's Note: Our many thanks for the photographer's submissions. Keep them coming, we will keep giving them a wide distribution!

Contributing Photographers:

Ex Comp R. H. McCoy, Jr., Secretary, Norfolk United No. 1

R. Ex. Thomas Varner, Grand Principal Sojourner



# The Virginia Keystone Newsletter – June 2024



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## District No. 15

This month, I would like to comment on a recent seminar following our Grand High Priest's theme of recruiting. A York Rite Seminar was held at Unity Lodge in Front Royal, Virginia. Twenty Companions and Brothers attended. The purpose of the Seminar was to acquaint Brothers interested in Joining a Royal Arch Chapter and a Commandery of Knight Templars. There were 20 Brothers and Companions present to witness the talks.

The Seminar was master-minded by Excellent Companion Edward Tooma, PHP of Shenandoah RAC No. 17, who invited the Eminent Grand Commander Dennis M. Haas, PDDGHP to address the Brothers assembled about joining the Commandery of Knight Templars. The Speakers of the day included: Rt. Ex. Alan Spear PDDGHP, Rt. Ex. Jake Trenary PDDGHP/Grand Sword Bearer of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia and Ex. Companion Edward Tooma PHP of Shenandoah RAC No. 17. The idea of a seminar like the one held in Capitular District 15, is noted below and would be worth consideration elsewhere in Virginia. It

never hurts to try. Getting one new member is better than none.

A snapshot of Ex. Companion Tooma's remarks are noted below"

"I still remember how excited I was 14 years ago when I took all my degrees in Fredericksburg, and I know you'll feel just as I did should you decide to take the First Best Step to more Masonic Light in Freemasonry. If you have been giving any thought to gaining more light in Masonry, I'd like to be the one who opens that door. "The Best First Step to More Light" would be for your consideration in becoming a Royal Arch Mason. Chapters are always looking for new companions. You notice I said Companions and not Brothers. I also mentioned a Chapter and not a Lodge. Why do Royal Arch Masons call its members Companions? When you combine two Latin words together you have "cum-panis", or Companion, who is someone with whom you shared your bread and could be trusted with your life. Companion is the apt description of a member of the Royal Arch, just as Brother is to the Craft Lodge. Royal Arch Masons call their meeting place a Chapter. Fellow Master Masons, let me ask you a question. Are you in possession of all the light, rights, and benefits of a Master Mason as understood by our ancient Brethren? You are not! Not until you are Exalted to the degree of the Holy Royal Arch. The Royal Arch Degree is described as the "root and marrow" of Freemasonry. It's the climax of ancient craft Masonry and Masonic Symbolism. This might

surprise you as it's also the completion of the Master Mason Degree. I want you to think back to the time when you were raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason, what did you receive? If you said, "More Light" you are right. As a Royal Arch Mason, you will find the greatest treasure of a Freemason, the long lost "Masters Word". To become a Companion, you must travel a rough and rugged path, learning lessons along the way and rejoicing as the long lost, ancient Master's Word is finally discovered and realized. This real "Word" is to be communicated only in a Royal Arch Chapter. The ceremony in which a Master Mason is advanced to a Companion is called Exaltation. Upon your Exaltation as a Royal Arch Mason, you will become a member of the oldest and largest rite of Freemasonry. The York Rite which has three primary bodies, a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, a Council of Royal and Select Masters or Cryptic Masons, and the Commandery of Knights Templar. I couldn't help but hear some of our brothers mentioning the Knights Templar. If any of you have thoughts of becoming a member, you must first travel that rough and rugged path and become a Royal Arch Mason. After hearing all of this, why then should you consider becoming a Royal Arch Mason? The number one reason: So, you can continue your voyage of discovery. And number two, because the Royal Arch has so much to offer. In it, you will gain firsthand experience in the mysteries, all unfolded, as you participate in its Mystic Degrees. By receiving more

Masonic Light as a Royal Arch Mason it will cement your understanding and appreciation of what it truly means to be a Master Mason. I hope I speak for my fellow companions that this talk has given you some profound interest in becoming a fellow Royal Arch Mason."

Next, SK Jason Curtis "Jake" Trenary (PDDGHP) discussed how the superstructure of York Rite Freemasonry is built upon the foundations of the Blue Lodge, the additional moral maxims are taught in the Royal Arch Chapter Degrees, and the Cryptic Council Degrees are to prepare each man's heart and conscience for the chivalric character and obligations he will assume as a Christian Freemason in the knightly orders. He discussed a brief history of the early organization of the local Commandery in the city of Winchester and its part in the formation of the Grand Commandery of Virginia. He highlighted the life of the first Grand Commander, SK Daniel Walker Thomas.

SK Trenary also shared the different philanthropic endeavors of the Grand Commandery of Virginia and the Grand Encampment of the Knights Templar of the USA, including the Knights Templar Eye Foundation and the Holy Land Pilgrimage fund that supports two

Christian ministers annually who wish to travel to the Holy Land from Virginia. He discussed the fact that the Grand Commandery of Virginia had increased its membership in each of the last three years. Lastly, he stressed the universal importance of being the best Freemason in the room and that sharing the tenants of York Rite Freemasonry outside of the Lodge Room was essential to improving the fabric of society within the Community at large.



Fraternally,  
Rt Ex. Alan Spear  
PDDGHP

## Norfolk Union No. 1

On May 13, 2024, ME/MI Bill Owens had the great pleasure of presenting a 50-year Royal Arch pin to Ex. Companion Ray Thomas Gregory. The 50-year Royal Arch pin, with its intricate design and polished finish, stands as a beacon of unwavering dedication and service.

In the quiet halls of Masonic lodges, where ancient rituals and timeless brotherhood intertwine, there exists a symbol that transcends mere metal and enamel. The 50-year Royal Arch pin, with its intricate design and polished finish, stands as a beacon of unwavering dedication and service.

Imagine the hands that have worn it—their fingers tracing the delicate curves, their hearts echoing the solemn oaths taken decades ago. Each scratch, each patina, tells a story of countless lodge meetings, charitable endeavors, and shared secrets. It is a badge of honor earned through steadfast loyalty, resilience, and a commitment to the Masonic principles.

So, when you see a Companion adorned with this pin, pause and honor the commitment etched into its surface. For within its modest dimensions lies the essence of Freemasonry—a timeless brotherhood, a quest for enlightenment, and a promise to uphold the sacred bonds that bind us all.





**Waynesboro Union No. 2**

At the Waynesboro Union No. 2 May stated convocation, Excellent George D. Vest was recognized for receiving the Knight York Cross of Honor at the 2024 Grand Conclave of the Grand

Commander of Knights Templar in Virginia. Companion Vest proudly wears the KYCH Jewel for his past service as Master, High Priest and Commander. Following our usual practice, this picture will be posted in the gallery of KYCH recipients in Lee Lodge No. 209.



**Richmond Washington No. 3-9**

Along his seemingly audacious schedule, the Grand High Priest paid a cordial visit to Richmond Washington No. 3, to visit

his many friends there! From the looks of all the smiling faces, it appears all had a wonderful time of friendship and comradery.



## Pearisburg No. 29

The editorial staff was overwhelmed on this one! Count them, 29 initiated at a 1-Day Festival held at Pearisburg No 29 this past 9 March, as part of District No 12, with Rt. Ex. Walter Ernie Lester as DDGHP. My, that must have been a glorious experience.

And it looks like a great supporting cast from our Grand Line as well.

Rt. Ex. Cole David was applauded for setting up the degrees and the Festival. Kudos to all!

Submitted by Rt. Ex. Tom Varner, Grand Principal Sojourner

Thanks Rt. Ex. Tom...seems like a challenge event !



**Mann Page No. 89**

Attached please find a picture from our Stated Convocation on 04/17/2024.

We conferred the Most Excellent Masters Degree on 4 candidates.

The degree was conferred in a most excellent manner.

It was a good night.

Skip Schrecengost, HP

Mann Page No. 89.



## W. G. Bottimore No. 28

In May, ME/MI Bill Owens had the great pleasure of presenting a 50-year Royal Arch pin to Ex. Companion Roscoe, Matney. The 50-year Royal Arch pin, with its intricate design and polished finish, stands as a beacon of unwavering dedication and service.

The pin's beauty lies not in its opulence but in its simplicity. The intertwined compass and square, the radiant sun, and the all-seeing eye—all converge to remind the wearer of their duty to seek truth, to square their actions, and to illuminate the path for others. It is a miniature mosaic of Masonic wisdom, a talisman that whispers, "You are part of something greater."

Imagine the hands that have worn it—their fingers tracing the delicate curves, their hearts echoing the solemn oaths taken decades ago. Each scratch, each patina, tells a story of countless lodge meetings, charitable endeavors, and shared secrets. It is a badge of honor earned through steadfast loyalty, resilience, and a commitment to the Masonic principles.

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**Masonic District No. 45**

As is always the case, ME/MI Bill Owens takes every opportunity to attend the Grand Master Official Visits across the state.

He and RE Scott Fielding are shown attending GMOV to the 45 Masonic District on May 24, 2024.





Ex. Companion Ed Tooma

## “Mr. Peanut”

Not long ago while attending a Royal Arch Chapter convocation a fellow Companion greeted me as Mr. Peanut. I didn't say anything but kept wondering all evening what he meant by that. After the meeting while at home, hanging up my Red blazer, I couldn't help but notice one of the accouterments on the blazer lapel was a tiny gold colored peanut. I immediately identified right there and then why the Companion greeted me as "Mr. Peanut." Several years ago when ME Companion Floyd Byron Goodwin was the Grand High Priest, he made it known if you wanted the gold peanut award, you had to visit his Chapter, Mt. Nebo, in order to receive the honor. Needless to say, I made the trip to Suffolk, Virginia with PDDGHP Alan Spear for an evening of fellowship and great dining. It was at this visitation where we both participated in the ceremony of being awarded the tiny, cute little lapel pin known as the peanut. To be very candid, I'm not sure if peanut awards still exist, so you might want to check. I hope you are lucky enough to join the peanut family. Either way, a visit to Mt. Nebo Chapter is well worth the trip to the Hampton Roads region. The seminar will feature a guest speaker who will cover the history of the "American York Rite," the "Mystic Degrees" of the Order and the "Exaltation" of becoming a member of the oldest Rite in Masonry – The York Rite. This gathering will be an educational experience unveiling the mysteries of the Holy Royal Arch.

If you are in the area, make it a point to join us. All Masons seeking more light and Companions are cordially invited. Light refreshments will be available.



It's as easy as 1,2,3 to receive your very own copy delivered to your desktop. Let your fingers do the registering for you via the keyboard. Ready! Start typing <https://virginiaroyalarch.org/> Voila! Now you are able to search the many topics only to be found in the Grand Chapter of Virginia on-line newsletter "The Keystone." Make sure to spread the word to all fellow Companions and mention it at the next Chapter meeting. And don't forget to add to the Trestleboard. The more that know about the "Keystone" the better they'll be informed. Reading the "Keystone" is the Rite thing to do.



From the Editors

## IN MEMORIAM

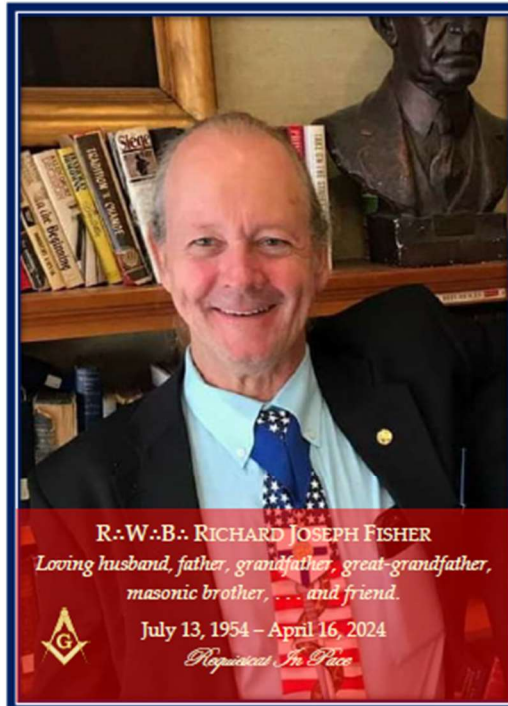
After a hard-fought struggle, our beloved friend of so many laid down his tools April 16, 2024, and was called from labor to refreshment. We miss him in so many ways, but mostly his company. May he rest in perpetual peace, and may his family find comfort in this troublesome time. God Bless you, Richard Fisher.



*Masonic Memorial Service & Celebration of Life*

in honor of

*R.: W.: B.: Richard Joseph Fisher*



**Saturday, June 15, 2024**

Masonic Memorial Service & Celebration of Life at 2:00PM  
Spotsylvania American Legion Auxiliary Unit 320  
8456 Brock Road | Spotsylvania, Virginia 22553

**Highlights of R.: W.: B.: Richard Joseph Fisher's Masonic Journey:**

❖I.: March 29, 2017 | ❖P.: May 24, 2017 | ❖R.: July 8 2017

Venerable Master of the Inquisitors of Solomon Council N° 364

Allied Masonic Degrees: Royal Ark Mariner | Knight of Constantinople | Order of the Scarlet Cord: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades | Ye Antient Order of Noble Corks | 32° Scottish Rite Mason | Knight of St. Andrew | Past President of Rappahannock Area Scottish Rite Association | District Deputy for the 8<sup>th</sup> Masonic District of Virginia, 2024 |

S.: W.: of the George Washington Lodge of Research N° 1732 | P.: M.: Kilwinning Crosse Lodge N° 2-237 | Past High Priest, Royal Arch Chapter Fredericksburg N° 23 | Past Commander, Knights Templar Commandery, Fredericksburg N° 1 | Masonic Order of Athelstan | The Commemorative Order of St. Thomas of Acon | Order of Knight Masons