Academy of Masonic Knowledge

The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania’s Academy of Masonic Knowledge does an admirable job of providing Masonic education through a variety of media. For Pennsylvania Masons, certification can be obtained using Masonic Education Units (MEUs) through reading selected books and submitting papers on a variety of Masonic topics.

Perhaps the most popular parts of their program are the presentations given at symposiums twice each year, in March and October. At the recent March symposium, Brother Alan Caselou, Right Worshipful Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of California, gave a detailed and interesting talk about Freemasonry Through Three Centuries: How do the first three centuries of Masonry inform the modern Mason on the current and future state of the Fraternity? He described his hypothesis that Freemasonry in America can be roughly divided into three time periods: (1) the Tavern period of the 18th century; (2) the Town Center period of the 19th century; and (3) the Cathedral period of the 20th century. Brother Caselou points to aspects of each period through examples. His depiction and explanation of the paintings “Lodge Over Simpkins’ Store” is a superb description of how what we see is often taken for granted while a deeper analysis provides interesting discoveries.

Brother Caselou points out that Freemasonry offers an individual true friendships, learning and improving oneself, and having an impact. Lodges need to provide these qualities to live up to what Freemasonry promises.

He projects that Freemasonry will need to be able to address four basic issues confronting the world and our Fraternity: gender, race, religion, and secrecy. Freemasons need to have answers to these questions which non-Masons will ask.

What Brother Caselou ultimately offers is hope; hope for the future of Freemasonry amid the knowledge that Freemasonry will survive long after each generation has experienced it in their own way. And he offers the assurance of the old prayer, “For there is hope that a tree if it be cut down that the tender branch thereof will sprout again…” [Job 14:7].

Mr. John Goldsmith, the founder and volunteer curator of the Demoulin Museum, told “The Demoulin Bros. Story” and how a firm founded in 1892 became a popular distributor of fraternal paraphernalia, including Masonic items. The Demoulin Company now is the largest supplier of music performance group apparel. It includes marching band uniforms and the like. The Masonic Library and Museum Association held their 2018 conference at the Demoulin Museum in Greenville, Illinois.

These presentations are available via livestreaming as well as online at www.pamasonicacademy.org. Past presentations include noted Masonic speakers and the following subjects:


FUNDING OF THE “EMESSAY NOTES” HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY THE SUPREME FOREST TALL CEDARS OF LEBANON
MSA Welcomes a New Commissioner for the Western Division at its Annual Meeting

February’s annual meeting of the Masonic Service Association of North America saw the retirement of MW Fred W. Sorsabel (PGM-CA) who had served as Western Division Commissioner since 2008. Current Grand Master James H. Kendall of the Grand Lodge of Washington was elected to a three-year term to replace MW Fred.

MW Thomas H. Galyen (PGM-OH) retired as chairman of the Executive Committee. MW Tom had previously been commissioner of the Great Lakes Division before assuming the chairmanship. His service to MSA began in 1997.

At the Executive Commissioner’s meeting following the annual meeting, MW Lanny R. Sander (PGM-OK) was chosen chairman to succeed MW Galyen. MW Sander served as the commissioner of the Central Division since 2001.

MSA welcomes MW Kendall and we are certain he will be invaluable bringing his organizational expertise and positive outlook to face the challenges that will present MSA in the future.

MW James H. Kendall, MSA Commissioner

Florida Disaster Relief Appeal Concludes

Grand Master John E. Karrour of the Grand Lodge of Florida has asked that MSA’s Disaster Relief Appeal be ended. The Appeal was announced after Hurricane Michael ravaged the Florida Panhandle bringing unprecedented destruction to the communities around Panama City. The winds of Hurricane Michael have recently been revised according to the National Weather Service, making it the first Category 5 hurricane to hit the United States mainland since Andrew in 1992.

The Appeal raised needed funds to allow the brothers, families, and communities to begin the recovery process. There is still much work to be done but the immediate concerns have been met. Grand Master Karrour thanks all who donated and helped.

“Freeborn”: What Does It Mean Any More?

A recent inquiry into the term “freeborn” led to some interesting insights.

In MSA’s Bible Quotations for Masonic Speakers comes John 8:32-33, “And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be of Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?”

From a past Short Talk Bulletin, “Well-Informed Brethren” (November, 1949), a definition: “Freeborn. Masonically used in the old Roman sense of being born without slave ancestry. Probably no human being alive has not some slave ancestor. In twenty generations, five hundred years, every man has had nearly two million, two hundred thousand ancestors; carry it back a thousand, two thousand years and the ancestors exceed the population of the earth. In the Masonic sense, freeborn means without traceable slave ancestry.” [By the late 20th century, nearly all grand lodges utterly rejected this definition.]

From “One Hundred Lost Words” (February 1947): “Freeborn. Necessary condition for a Masonic initiate. Denotes one not slave-born.” [An earlier interpretation was “one with no known slave ancestry.”]

An MSA survey in January 1938 found this term on the petitions of Delaware, Maryland, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, and Pennsylvania. From Mackey’s Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry edited and expanded by Robert Ingham Clegg. 1929, “After the abolition of slavery in the West Indies by the British Parliament, the Grand Lodge of England on September 21, 1847, changed the word free-born into free man, but the ancient landmark has never been removed in America.”

Most would agree the term today means under no restraint of liberty, either by confinement, arrest, or bailment. Again from Mackey, “...as Freemasonry involves a solemn contract, no one can legally bind himself to its performance who is not a free agent and the master of his own actions.”