The Old-Fashioned Way Some Masons Settled their Differences

The February 2019 issue of Kentucky's Masonic Home Journal featured an article about when dueling was prevalent, even among Masons. Although illegal in the United States, and certainly an offensive remedy for Masons, nonetheless, human nature being what it was often overruled clearer thinking.

Two of the abusers were Brother Henry Clay, then-Secretary of State, and Senator John Randolph in 1826. Their dispute centered on Senator Randolph impugning Secretary Clay's reputation by calling him a "Puritan with a blackleg," or a dishonest card cheat. Since neither wanted to wound the other seriously, both shot without conviction, and they decided to call it off.

The same Brother Henry Clay, a member of Lexington Lodge No. 1, had earlier defended Aaron Burr on charges of treason in 1806. Of course, Burr, while vice-president in 1804, had shot and killed possible Freemason Alexander Hamilton. Another duel Brother Clay was involved in was with Brother Humphrey Marshall, brother of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States. Brother Marshall called Brother Clay "a liar," and the duel was on. Each suffered minor wounds by the time the smoke cleared, but each survived. In 1820, Brother Clay later became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

In 1818, Grand Master and Dr. William H. Richardson was severely wounded by Brother and Dr. Benjamin Dudley. Brother Dudley's timely intervention stopped the wound from becoming lethal, and Grand Master Richardson attended his Grand Lodge session later that month.

Another duel fought on Kentucky soil involved Brother and later to become Tennessee Grand Master and President of the United States Andrew Jackson. Brother Jackson acted to defend the honor of his wife against slurs by Charles Dickinson. The first shot wounded Brother Jackson, and although his gun misfired, which should have ended the duel, he fired again and mortally wounded his foe. The lack of "playing by the rules" did not prohibit him from escaping a murder charge or becoming Grand Master and President. Brother Jackson entered into more than one hundred duels during his lifetime.

Dueling wasn't exclusive to Kentucky either. Brother and Senator Thomas Hart Benton, charter member of Missouri Lodge No. 1 and uncle of a future Grand Master of Iowa, had many duels. He killed Charles Lucas at their second duel. Prospective Brother Abraham Lincoln, Illinois legislator and later President, was challenged to a duel by Brother James Shields, then state auditor and later senator of three states, over an alleged insulting letter. The duel was called off when Brother Shields was convinced Mr. Lincoln had not authored the letter as suspected. Brother Stephen Decatur Jr., probably a member of St. Johns Lodge in Maryland, fell at the hands of Commodore James Barron in 1820. Brother Decatur accepted the commodore's apology, at death's door, saying it was a fair fight.

While Masons still have differences, they have come a long way from the time when dueling was the means to address disagreements. Social media, anonymous letters, gossip, and innuendo are now the un-Masonic way to squabble. The advice "you agree to avoid private piques and quarrels..." and "that noble emulation of who can best serve and best agree" should be all a Mason needs now to avoid disputes.
High Twelvians Busy at Grand Masters Conference in Rapid City, South Dakota

President Joseph H. Santisteban of High Twelve International had a busy time meeting with visiting Grand Masters and Masonic dignitaries at the Conference of Grand Masters in Rapid City, South Dakota in February. He spoke to them about High Twelve's support of Blue Lodges and its continuing role to bring Masons together. Many High Twelve clubs meet for lunch at noon or “High Twelve.”

Their particular mission is to give assistance to youth groups: Order of Rainbow for Girls, Job's Daughters, and the Order of Demolay.

A photograph in their Spring 2019 publication The High Twelvian showed High Twelve was the only Masonic body to give a present to each Grand Master other than a typical pin or handout. The nicely wrapped and bowed gift was placed right next to MSA’s annual report!

It was a Past Grand Master who went “Over the Edge”!

Our June Emessay Notes inadvertently congratulated Wisconsin Grand Master Scott Pedley for going “over the edge” and rappelling down six stories for a fundraiser for the Children’s Dyslexia Center of Upper Wisconsin. Instead, the photo clearly showed it was Past Grand Master L. Arby Humphrey who strapped on the gear and braved the drop. Maybe next time, MW Pedley? Thanks to the sharp eyes of Grand Secretary MW Mike DeWolfe for bringing this oversight to our attention.

The Longest Serving Grand Master in History

There have been only ten Grand Masters of the United Grand Lodge of England since the unification in 1813; of these, five were members of the Royal family. The current Grand Master Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, was elected and installed in 1967 and has served the longest, 52 years. His father, Prince George Duke of Kent, had served as Grand Master from 1939 until he was killed in a military air crash in 1942. He was the fourth son of King George V. Prince Edward will turn 84 in October.

Prince George's great uncle, and uncle of King George V, was Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, who served as Grand Master from 1901 until his death in 1939. Prince Arthur had previously been the longest serving Grand Master.

Prince Arthur’s brother, King Edward VII, son of Queen Victoria, had served as Grand Master from 1874 to 1901 but was obliged to resign upon his ascension to the throne.

The first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England was Prince Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex, son of King George III. He had previously served as the Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England (“Moderns”) while his brother, Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and Strathearn and father of Queen Victoria, was the Grand Master of the Ancient Grand Lodge of England.

“Most Powerful Man in Baseball”—Missed

When the Short Talk Bulletin listed Masonic Hall of Famers in the May and June 2019 issues, Brother Byron Bancroft “Ban” Johnson was inadvertently left off the list. Brother Johnson was a baseball executive of the Western Baseball League which was renamed the American League in 1900. As its first president, he initiated a World Series pitting his American League with the National League.

Later, he started Little League which for years was known as the Ban Johnson Little League.

Brother Ban was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1937, six years after his passing. A Masonic service was performed by Spencer Lodge No. 95, Spencer, Indiana, as a courtesy for Brother Ban’s home lodge, Nova Caesarea Harmony Lodge No. 2, Cincinnati, Ohio.