



Biography

MWBro James Ratchford Grand Master 2016–2017



MWBro Bro James Ratchford was born in September 1956 in Kentville, Nova Scotia. He was an “army brat,” and as his father was transferred about he was able to travel Canada, with stops in New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia. He settled in Alberta in 1978 and worked in the restaurant industry. It was during this time that he met his best friend and wife, Lorna, and they have been married for 34 years. They have two daughters, Melissa and Heather; a son-in law, Kris; and a grandson, Marius.

In 1990, James returned to school to obtain his business degree. It was while attending school he met a man who would have a great influence on his future. RWBro Brian Robison became his friend, his business partner (Brian and James ran a tax services business together) and, most importantly, his sponsor into our beloved Craft.

James was initiated in June 1996, passed in July and raised in August

in Rockyford Lodge No. 123, and has served as its Worshipful Master five times. He affiliated with Zetland Lodge No. 83 in Calgary in 2014. Drumheller Lodge No. 146 granted him honorary membership in 2010. He is a Royal Arch Mason, and has served as First Principal of Otuskwan Chapter. He also serves on the Executive Committee of Grand Chapter, and was its Auditor. He belongs to Cyprus Preceptory No. 33

of the Knights Templar, where he is a Preceptor. He is also an active member of Cryptic Rite Masons, the Red Cross of Constantine, the York Rite College and Knights Templar Priests. He is also a member of Al Azhar Shrine, where he served as director in 2010 and in 2011 was Commander of the Tin Lizzie Corp. In 2006 he was DDGM for Dinosaur District under MWBro Rex Dawson. He served on the Board of General purposes as Vice President and President and as the Chairman for the Finance committee. He was elected Junior Grand Warden in June 2013.

Inaugural Address

We Are the Leaders of the Craft

MWBro James Ratchford, Grand Master of Alberta, 2016–2017

“Leadership is about submission to duty, not elevation to power”

Gordon Tootoosis (as Elder Cecil Delaronde in the TV series *Blackstone*)

As we progress through our Masonic career we will have many opportunities to take on different offices, with different roles and responsibilities. We sometimes accept these without really understanding the duties associated with the office. The Lodge, however, expects that we are able to fulfill all the obligations of that office. If this scenario sounds familiar, you should not be surprised to hear that some of us should have said “no” to accepting the office.

This problem is particularly serious at the Worshipful Master level. We have many people who, because of their personalities, should not be pushed through the progression to become the Master of the Lodge. We all have seen members pushed because the Past Masters do not want to face another year as Master of the Lodge. Once the Master is in place, then the Past Masters, the officers and the members of the Lodge stand and rail against the quality of the Master.

If you wanted to be a leader you should have accepted the shortcomings of the Brother and advised him not to

go on to Worshipful Master. It is the responsibility of every member of the Lodge to carefully select those who will lead, direct and nurture the health of the Lodge.

Those members who do not have the ability to be Master have much to offer a Lodge and we should use their talents to the benefit of all the Brothers. I was fortunate to have a Brother approach me just after I had been raised and kindly advise me that he would be happy to help anywhere in the Lodge but he was not prepared to become the Master. To his word, anything that had been asked of him he fulfilled with humble service.

My Brethren, lack of leadership is the downfall of every organization. It is the responsibility of each member to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, to better enable them to assist the management and growth of our Lodges, Districts and Grand Lodge. We are blessed in our Fraternity to have Brethren who are great teachers, orators, cooks, bartenders, etc. These Brethren know what they have to offer and we should accept them for who they are. We need to assist them in

developing those special skills so that our beloved Craft becomes a place of acceptance for all. If we fail in accepting our Brethren for what they have to offer, we will be looking at the demise of our Craft. I hope we all believe that we can rise above our differences and place the good of the Lodge above forcing those into positions they should not enter.

If a Brother desires to become a leader in any area of the Craft, then how to we train them? Is it done just by going through the chairs? That's the usual progression. But, Brethren, that is an error on our part! We need to provide them with a course that will make them a better leader and more effective communicator. The problem lies in developing such a program. We are fortunate to have the Lodge Officer Training Program to assist in our understanding of our Lodge duties. However, we need to go further. We need to offer a program dedicated to leadership.

I have been fortunate to discover

that the Grand Lodge of Ohio has created such a program, and we have been given permission to use it. It is the duty of each and every member of the Craft to immerse ourselves in this program and discover where we can best assist our beloved Craft. It can be found at www.freemasonuniversity.com. This site focuses not only on being a leader but also on Lodge management, budgeting and running meetings that will attract members to attend. If we fail to use the tools provided, we have failed our members, Lodges and Grand Lodge. But above all we have failed ourselves.

George Tootoosis, portraying Cecil Delaronde said "leadership is about submission to duty," and I agree. But leadership is also a duty to our membership, our Lodges, our Districts and the Craft in general. It is also our duty to accept each of our members for their special talents and not to push them into areas they should not enter. Let us become the developers of talent and be the best counsellors for our Brethren.

My Brethren, it is our duty to discover our talents and become the leaders in that area. By focusing on these skills we become better men, fathers, husbands, employees and Masons.

Remember, we are all leaders, but not necessarily Masters of our Lodges. We own a duty to each and every Brother in our Grand Lodge to know ourselves and know the limits of each other so that we may become a true and faithful servant to our beloved Craft.

Remember, my brothers,
Leadership is about submission to duty, not elevation to power.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I hope that I can meet all that is expected of me during my term as your Grand Master. Also, I hope that you can meet the expectation the Craft is placing on you. Lead where you can, submit and obey where you must. And may the Great Architect give us the wisdom to accept our duty and responsibility to our Craft.

Report on the Conference of Grand Masters of North America

MWBro James Ratchford, Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Alberta

The annual gathering of Grand Masters occurred in Madison, Wisconsin on 20-23 February 2016. The committee had changed the Conference by shortening the opening and dispensing with the introduction of the visiting concordant bodies. There was more focus placed on the breakout sessions to provide a better involvement of the participants.

The Deputy Grand Masters gathered to discuss what the focus of upcoming Conferences should be. There seemed to be a big request to have the following topics discussed: Leadership, Membership Development and Retention, Guarding the West Gate and Lodge Experience.

We attended several of the breakout sessions and enjoyed some of the information shared. I was surprised by the number of options available for

each Officer to attend. I have to report that after attending what I thought would be an interesting topic, I found that it focused mostly on US Grand Lodge issues. One in particular dealt with Lodge security, and the discussion digressed into what type of handgun members were carrying on themselves while in a tyled Lodge. It concerned me because when we attend Lodge it is supposed to be a sanctuary of peace and trust. I had hoped there would be good information regarding keeping our Lodge buildings and Grand Lodge offices safe and secure in light of what had taken place in Quebec and the Lodge hall that was marked for a "terrorist" attack. Alas we will never know if this was a good session.

As the conference drew to a close we were able to tour the Lodge Hall in Madison, as it was just down the street

from the hotel. We were warmly greeted and treated to a wonderful tour of the facility. From the outside this unassuming building opened to an impressive expanse. The hall had three floors and had many alcoves for us to be directed through. The last place we were taken was an auditorium that sat close to 400 people. To show its openness and inclusiveness, they were preparing the facility to welcome the Dali Lama on his US tour.

Next year we will be travelling to Omaha, Nebraska for the Conference and I look forward to renewing friendships and making new ones.



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Report on the Conference of Grand and District Grand Lodges A.F. & A.M. of Canada

21–23 April 2016, Winnipeg, Manitoba

RWBro Gordon Berard, Deputy Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Alberta

The Conference opened on Thursday, 21 April under the gavel of the President, Clyde Townes, from New Brunswick. All jurisdictions were represented except Prince Edward Island.



In preparation for this Conference the Grand Masters and Deputy Grand Masters were asked to prepare Questionnaire Reports. The Grand Masters were asked to list priorities in a changing demographic. The Deputy Grand Masters were asked to list the greatest opportunities over the next five years, and how to take advantage of them. The responses from both groups tended to blur, hence the responses are summarized below by category.

- **Focus on quality candidates**, rather than fighting the numbers game — besides, quality begets quality (follow the six-step program). Mentorship programs are a must.
- **Maintain our traditions**, which begs the question, “When is a tradition a tradition?” Saskatchewan expands the interpretation of tradition to include the festive board and the fellowship it brings, traditional chili lunches with the spouses, railroad Lodges with railroad dress and traditional pub nights.
- **Provide Grand Lodge officer training**. In Ontario, DDGM and Board of General Purposes candidates must complete a course with a focus on team building — not unlike corporate leadership training.
- **Good ritual** was a common priority. This is where we leave a lasting impression on our new members.
- **Embrace the future and stop resisting it**. Improve communication tools and be sensitive to a diverse membership. Manitoba has a Virtual Lodge for shut-ins, which has existed for four years and “meets” on the fifth Wednesdays during the year.
- **Public awareness** can grow through volunteer activities such as blood donor programs and hospital

chauffeur services.

- **Adoption of new technology** echoed comments from the Conference of Grand Masters of North America. Consider videotaping our conferences for others, holding video conference meetings, using text rather than using the web, and building a database of educational papers. Consider the use of smart phone apps to provide information, make reservations and pay dues.
- **Quality education programs**. Research Lodges and Lodges of Instruction help. Additionally, the importance of time spent interpreting the degrees can be more important than the degrees themselves.

Interestingly, the Brock University Partnership with the Grand Lodge of Canada sponsors the annual Dr. Charles A Sankey Lecture Series at the university. The 20 March 2016 lecture by Professor Andrew Prescott (Glasgow University) was called “Searching for the Apple Tree: What Happened in 1716.” (<http://sankeylectures.ca>) The partnership established between the Grand Lodge and Brock University, St. Catharines, has proven most productive and mutually beneficial to both educational institutions. Its beginning was with the initiative of the Heritage Lodge No. 730 to support and maintain the Masonic collection in the James A. Gibson Library, and continues with the posting on line of the Proceedings of Grand Lodge from 1855 to 2010.

Other opportunities/challenges facing Grand Lodges

- Explanation of the importance of Freemasonry.
- Introduction of the six-step program.
- Reduction of Grand Lodge expenses.
- Value for money. Manitoba uses plastic dues cards to cut costs and reduce administration work.
- Monthly payment of dues.
- Smart phone payments, electronic payments through PayPal, e-transfer, etc.
- On-line fillable forms.
- Online list of frequently asked questions.
- Use of video meetings.

- Role of the Board of General Purposes.
- Explain the workings of Grand Lodge to our members.
- Crumbling infrastructure.

Good Grand Master Leadership style

- Communicate.
- Listen.
- Delegate.
- Consult.
- Less dictatorial.
- Stay connected after the term in office.

Possible Future Topics for this Conference

- Declining membership.
- Social Media.
- Interactive Data Bases.
- Media Interaction (public interviews).

Conference of Grand Masters of North America

Reports were received on the Conference of Grand Masters of North America, which is held in conjunction with the Conference of Grand Secretaries (Feedback was that this was one of the better conferences.). An interesting take-away from the Secretaries’ Conference was that Lodges come and go; don’t keep Lodges on life support (the average Lodge life is 15 years) and new Lodges will spring up. Note this 15-year statistic includes Europe and North America. In addition, more members are retained if Lodges go dark as opposed to amalgamation with another Lodge. By the way, poor leadership is the number one reason for Lodges closing.

A good paper was presented on technology which concludes: web pages are obsolete; e-mail isn’t as effective as we might think; and smart phones are the new computer/tablet. We must transition to smart phone apps.

One of the speakers at the GM Conference was Christopher Hodapp, the author of *Freemasonry for Dummies*, who concludes improvements can be made if we keep meetings short, involve the family and have a bar.

The election of officers at the end of the conference resulted in MWBro James Ratchford ascending to the office of Conference President.

Presentation of the Ross Sheppard Memorial Bursary



Lauren Ross, recipient of the Ross Sheppard Memorial Bursary and RWBro Fred Bowker, Chairman of the MHEB Fund Committee.

My name is Lauren Ross, and I am the recipient of the Ross Sheppard Memorial Bursary, as well as one of the recipients of the Lauraine Douchet Masonic Bursary for Pharmacy and Medicine. First and foremost, for myself and on behalf of all other bursary recipients this year, I truly and sincerely thank you.

I would like to start by telling you a little bit about myself. I grew up on a farm outside of Ponoka, a small town about an hour south of Edmonton. Living in a rural farming community, I developed a solid sense of values such as a strong work ethic, the importance of doing things together as a team and as a family. I genuinely care about the environment, my neighbours and my community.

My family has strong ties to the Freemasons. My Great Grandfather, Grandfather and Father have all been Worshipful Masters of Britannia Lodge. My Grandmother, Doreen Ross, who is here with me tonight, recently received her 70-year pin from the Order of the Eastern Star. My Grandfather, [RWBro] Robert (Bob) Ross, who passed away in the fall of last year, has been an inspiration to me throughout my life

To all Arizona Snowbird Masons

From RWBro Brian Ireland, Strathmore Lodge No. 53

A number of Brethren from Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan winter in Arizona, where they attend various Lodges in their area over the course of the winter.

As we are aware, the Arizona Brethren practice the Arizona F&AM Rite, which is similar to our Ancient York Rite. During the course of their education in District 10, we Canadians have been asked to demonstrate the opening and closing of a Canadian Rite Lodge and have explained some of the differences (which are many). The Arizona Masons are VERY interested in seeing an exemplification degree in the Canadian Ritual and have asked if we could possibly arrange to do one next winter. They are looking at two evenings, one in Casa Grande, which is about 45 minutes South of Phoenix for the Southern Brethren, and one in Mesa for the Phoenix area Masons.

I winter in the Casa Grande area, along with three or four other Canadian Brothers. Obviously we need more. What I'm seeking is contact with any Canadian Rite Mason (or Ancient York Rite Brother who is willing to work in the Canadian Rite) who winters in Arizona and would be interested in assisting with



RWBro Brian Ireland, PDDGM Dinosaur District (2014-2015).

putting on a degree. Which degree to perform is still open, as are all Chairs from the WM down and all parts for whichever degree. We would also need one of our own for a candidate for the proving up portions unless we do the First Degree, where we have no shortage of volunteers from Arizona including a PGM.

I would appreciate any Brother who is interested contacting me with the dates you would be down

South, the work you do in each degree and what station you would want to fill. From the gathered information, we would tentatively be able to determine the time frame, the degree and who would be doing what. I am working with a Brother from BC who is also canvassing his jurisdiction. (We would use the Alberta Canadian Ritual)

Obviously, we want to do a super job, hence as much time as possible is needed to put this together. A couple of Lodges are willing to hold an emergent meeting solely for this Education night.

Anxiously awaiting your reply, I remain,

Fraternally yours,

RWBro Brian Ireland
brian@brimarconsulting.com

and is truly missed.

For as long as I can remember, I have always been interested in the field of health care. I dreamt of being a veterinarian, doctor, physiotherapist, and more. Along with a love of music, singing, drama and sports, I have a true love of science. After graduating High School, at 17 years of age, and working for a year in a locally owned pharmacy in Ponoka, I realized that pharmacy was the profession where I could fulfill my dreams.

In May of this year I completed my second year of Pharmacy at the University of Alberta. I devote a great deal of time and energy to my studies and sincerely love what I am doing. When I graduate from Pharmacy, I would like to work within the community of Ponoka, or in a rural central Alberta community. I feel that such a place will give me the opportunity to help people that truly need it.

To me, a pharmacist is a health care professional who is caring, knowledgeable, and dedicated to improving the well-being of others. Dr. Douchet described his wife, Lauraine, as "the ultimate pharmacist." She was well known as a compassionate, dedicated professional who embodied many fine qualities, and I aspire to become a professional pharmacist who works and lives with the same spirit and compassion for others that she had.

To conclude, I am honoured and humbled to have been chosen to receive this esteemed bursary. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation; this

bursary is truly of great help to me as I continue on to my last two years of pharmacy.

Thank you to the Grand Lodge of Alberta, the Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund Committee and the family of Lauraine Douchet.

Left to Right: Dr George Douchet, Lauren Ross, MWBro Chris Batty and RWBro Fred Bowker.



Presentation of Bursaries in Calgary

On 24 June 2016, on the occasion of Freemasons Day in Calgary, seven recipients of bursaries from the Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund were presented with their Certificates in the Blue Room of Freemasons' Hall by the District Deputy Grand Masters of Alpha and Calgary-Highwood Districts. A large audience of family and friends were on hand for the presentation.

From left to right:

RWBro Les Saggars, DDGM Calgary-Highwood District; Samantha Bruniski;

Valerie Leow; SuNa Guo; Ryan Pohle; Jory Oberg; Amanda Chan; Sumaira Islam; and RWBro Murray Pay, DDGM Alpha District.



Symbolism

A talk to the Board of General Purposes on 10 June 2016

MWBro Chris Batty, Past Grand Master, The Grand Lodge of Alberta

The Grand Lodge of Alberta has sixteen Grand Officers who are “Grand Masters,” comprising fourteen District Deputy Grand Masters, one Deputy Grand Master and one Grand Master. Each of their aprons displays the same symbol: the seven-eared wheat.

This symbol comes from the Bible — Genesis, Chapter 41 — and the story of Joseph and his coat of many colours. Joseph was a favourite of his father. His brothers resented this and threw Joseph into a well and abandoned him. A passing caravan saved Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Joseph interpreted dreams, and when the Pharaoh heard this he had Joseph interpret his dreams of seven fat and healthy cows that came up out of the river, followed by seven lean and starving cows and of seven-eared wheat that was full, fat, and heavily loaded with grain and replaced by seven-eared wheat that was thin, withered and dried up. Joseph said that the dreams

were the same, that God would provide seven years plenty throughout the land, followed by seven years of famine, and that Pharaoh should store, in granaries, 20 per cent of the harvest each year so that there would be food available in the time of famine.

The story of Pharaoh’s dream and Joseph’s interpretation is one of the oldest stories in the Bible. The placement of the seven-eared wheat on the 16 “Grand Master” Officers’ aprons in this jurisdiction has existed since 1905, and probably can be traced back to 1813 with the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Our job as “Grand Masters” is to put the story of Pharaoh’s dreams and Joseph’s interpretation into context for Alberta today. If we change the word “famine” to “tornado” we should be reminded of the 1987 Edmonton tornado; if we change the word “famine” to “flood” we should be reminded of the 2013 High River and Calgary



floods; if we change the word “famine” to “fire” we should be reminded of the 2011 Slave Lake, and the 2016 Fort McMurray fires; if we change the word “famine” to “low commodity prices” we should be reminded of the current low economic activity of Alberta. Further, Joseph recommended that 20 per cent of the annual crop for each of the seven years be stored in granaries. In today’s context this could mean that 1.4 times the individual’s gross annual income be held as cash in a bank or in Government of Canada Bonds or blue chip stocks that may be converted to cash in less than seven days, held in a self-administered

discount broker account.

Some find it easy to say that they are Master Masons, and will readily provide the date that they were raised as proof of their being a Master Mason. In the General Charge's ideal of a Freemason we are given as one of the many criteria the ability to fulfil our duties as a man, a subject, a husband, and a father. Providing for your family in good times is easy, but it is not so easy when times are hard, when economies fail, when devastation surrounds you. Following Joseph's recommendation and having 1.4 times your gross annual

salary as cash in the bank or in readily convertible equities in a broker account will certainly be of considerable help in you being able to meet the requirements of the ideal of a Freemason.

So I ask the question: "When did you become a Master Mason? Was it the day that you were raised or sometime after that?"

My theme for the year has been *Learn the Ritual, Present the Ritual, Understand the Ritual, and Apply the Ritual* to ourselves, so that we may become happy, healthy, wealthy, and wise. I also include in the term "ritual"

the symbolism found in our Lodges, on our Tracing Boards, and on our regalia. Brethren, please remember that as leaders in Freemasonry in Alberta, it is our job to inspire the young member to become a successful Freemason and to have a successful career and a successful life. Now that you are aware of the symbolism of the seven-eared wheat I am sure that you are more aware of how to have a successful life.

Brethren, thank you for coming to this, our Annual Communication. I hope that you all learn something, have a great time and have a safe journey home.

